

The folk, roots and world music magazine

# penguin eggs

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Issue No. 55 autumn 2012 \$5.99



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WHITEHORSE Oct 4  
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RADICAL REELS Oct 14  
DE TEMPS ANTAN Oct 19  
GARRY KRINSKY PRESENTS  
TOYING WITH SCIENCE\*\* Oct 20  
HANK WILLIAMS "LIVE" 1952 Oct 26  
BLUEBIRD NORTH: HALLOWEEN BLUES Oct 31  
FEAT. COLIN LINDEN, LITTLE MISS HIGGINS,  
JOHN RUTHERFORD, GRAHAM GUEST AND GRANT STOVEL  
NOISY THEATRE: SINGING WITH SYLVIA\*\* Nov 7  
DANNY MICHEL Nov 9  
HONENS LAUREATE MINSOO SOHN\* Nov 10  
LUNCH AT ALLEN'S Dec 13 & 14  
SOCALLED Jan 19  
DEL BARBER & BEN SURES\* Jan 25  
HOT 8 BRASS BAND Jan 26  
HOT 8 GUMBO\*\* Jan 27  
ONE MAN LORD OF THE RINGS Jan 30  
JEREMY FISHER & EMM GRYNER Feb 2  
GREN'T BUTT Feb 9  
THE NORTHERN PIKES Feb 16  
ERIC BIBB & HABIB KOITÉ Feb 22  
NOISY THEATRE: MALCOLM THE MAGICIAN\*\* Feb 27  
OLD MAN LUEDECKE Feb 28  
HOT CLUB OF SAN FRANCISCO PRESENTS CINEMA VIVANT Mar 8  
MARRY MANX Mar 15  
BC'S THE IRRELEVANT SHOW Mar 16  
ROUGE DE LÀ PERFORMS L'ATELIER\*\* Mar 17  
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COWBOY JUNKIES Apr 19 & 20



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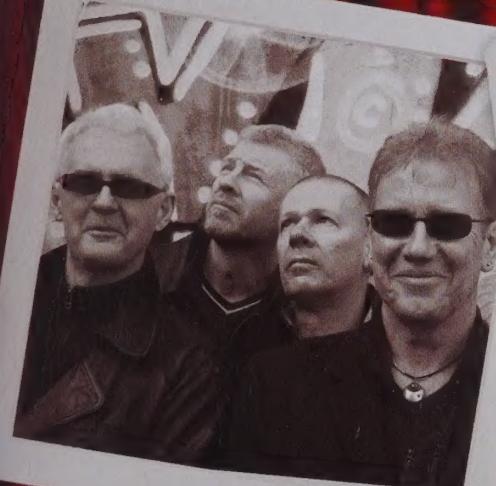


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## SEPTEMBER

- 14 Mark Sterling's Delta Blues Show | Blues
- 28 Janiva Magness | Blues
- 29 Ray Bonneville | Blues ☕

## OCTOBER

- 6 An Evening with Ian Thomas | Singer Songwriter
- 10 Oysterband | Celtic
- 12 Monte Montgomery | Blues
- 21 Strawbs | Celtic

## NOVEMBER

- 10 Ana Egge | Singer Songwriter ☕
- 16 Alison Brown Quartet | Folk
- 23 Chris Velan | Folk ☕
- 24 Alpha Yaya Diallo's West African Summit | World

NEW SHOWS ADDED THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

Show schedule subject to change

☕ Café Series

## JANUARY

- 18 Cindy Church | Singer Songwriter
- 26 Up On Cripple Creek: Front Porch Roots Revue  
Tribute to "The Band" | Folk

## FEBRUARY

- 1 James Hill | Folk ☕

## MARCH

- 1 Nano Stern | Blues ☕
- 1 The Once | Folk
- 2 Sarah Slean | Singer Songwriter
- 9 Corky Siegel Chamber Blues | Blues ☕
- 15 The Waymores | Folk
- 23 Carlos del Junco & The Blues Mongrels | Blues
- 24 Jayme Stone's Room of Wonders | Folk

## APRIL

- 20 J.R. Shore | Folk ☕

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The Brand New Album

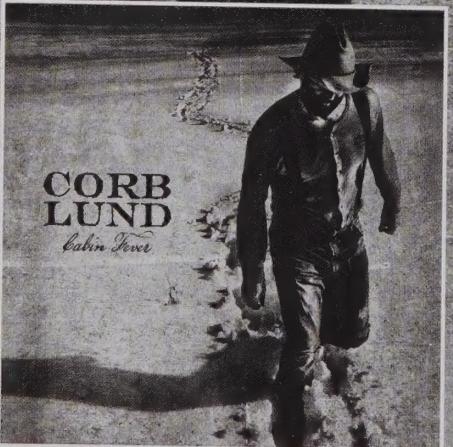
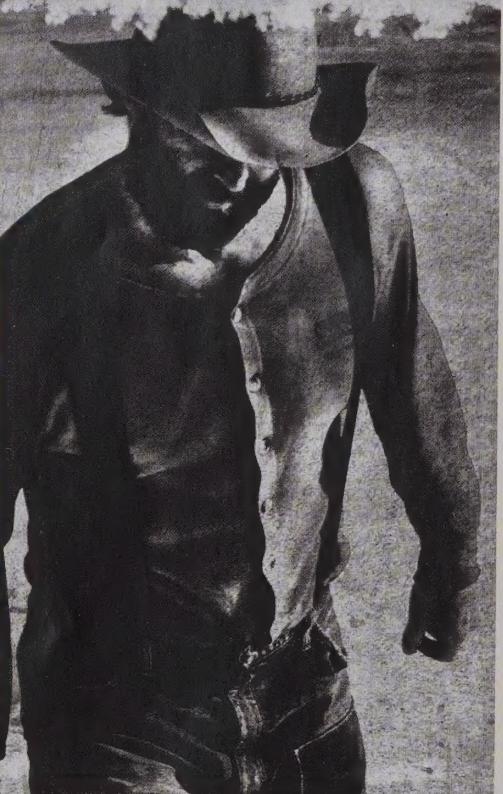
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# penguin eggs

Canada's Folk, Roots and World Music Magazine

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This magazine takes its name from Nic Jones's wonderful album Penguin Eggs — a collection of mainly traditional British folk songs revitalized with extraordinary flair and ingenuity. Released in Britain in 1980, it has grown into a source of inspiration for many young, gifted performers.

Nic, sadly, suffered horrific injuries in a car crash in 1982 and has never fully recovered. He now seldom performs. His care and respect shown for the tradition and prudence to recognize the merits of innovation makes Penguin Eggs such an outrageously fine recording. This magazine strives to reiterate that spirit. Nic Jones's Penguin Eggs is available through Topic Records.

Penguin Eggs magazine is published and printed in Canada and acknowledges the generous financial support from the Alberta Foundation for the Arts. We also acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Periodical Fund (CPF) for our publishing activities.



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## editorial

As Robert Burns once sang, *summer's a pleasant time...* And what music fan could disagree with that sentiment? Certainly not me. Throughout July and August, I made it to five festivals—Vancouver Island Musicfest and Vancouver, Mission, Calgary and Edmonton Folk Music Festivals—in the space of six gratifying but pleasantly exhausting weeks. Held in stunning, idyllic locations, these wonderful events simply reiterate that, unquestionably, Canada hosts some of the greatest folk festivals in the world. Obviously the local denizens concur. Several of these events posted sold-out signs in advance and the remainder, I understand, added considerably to their coffers.

While some of the musicians and singers appeared at more than one of these events, crossover booking is understandable. Performers prepare national tours to coincide with the folk festival season. And who would say no to the likes of Emmylou Harris just because she was booked to play in another time zone the week before. Besides, the talent pool is vast and mighty. And there is always, always, somebody new to discover, even for the most grizzled veteran music journalist.

You can always feel that sense of discovery manifest itself in the joy that ripples through a crowd during an exceptional performance. It's like a rush of adrenalin that none of us tire of experiencing. Mad as it sounds, hundreds of CDs come through the door on a regular basis and yet I continually scrounge around searching for the next best thing to pique my interest.

Obviously our folk festival artistic directors do likewise. And let it be said, their tastes, for the most part, are broader and generally more liberal than their European counterparts. They are not confined by traditions or silly regional biases and, therefore, book more eclectic programs. Of course, there were grumblings in these parts a few years back about some festivals swinging too much towards the pop and rock end of the business. If so, the pendulum appears to have drifted back towards a middle ground that encompasses both folk's traditional values and its contemporary roots offshoots.

These festivals have now existed for at least a quarter of a century. And while they are clearly at different stages in their development, an undeniable sense of purpose and progress now prevails instead of past trepidation. Estelle Klein, the late doyen of Canadian folk festivals, must surely look down on all these hijinks with a warm, comforting smile.

— By Roddy Campbell

## cover feature

42 . . . Likable and down to earth, songwriter Dan Mangan attracted his share of good karma as he climbed from Vancouver street corners and coffee houses to prestigious theaters and national awards. Eric Volmer catches up with Mangan in Berlin after a summer of conquering folk festivals across Canada.

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## quotable

"I don't think I would have written about my father beating my mother up if I wasn't able to take the reader to the man that he became. That's the real story—redemption."

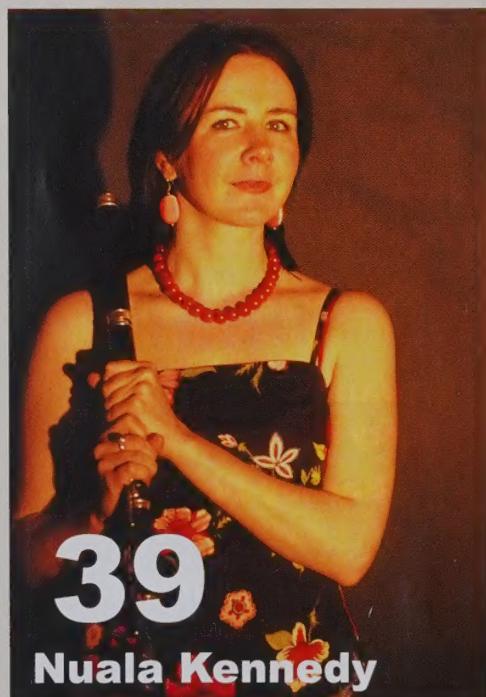
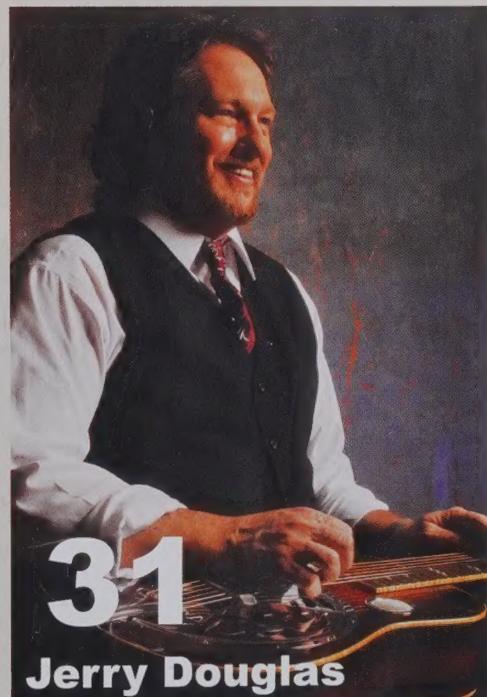
— Rodney Crowell

"He was mad into the music like myself and we'd lay like lunatics. We'd play for fun at random opportunities and sneak off for a tune somewhere just for five minutes. We went to this concert in Canada and in the break we went down into the car park and sat in the van and played some tunes. It was obsession beyond belief."

— Nuala Kennedy remembers Oliver Schroer

"Leonard Cohen came to see us playing with us at The Scene in New York City and asked us if we wanted to play on his first album, so we did (on two tracks including *So Long Marianne*). He knew what to do with us."

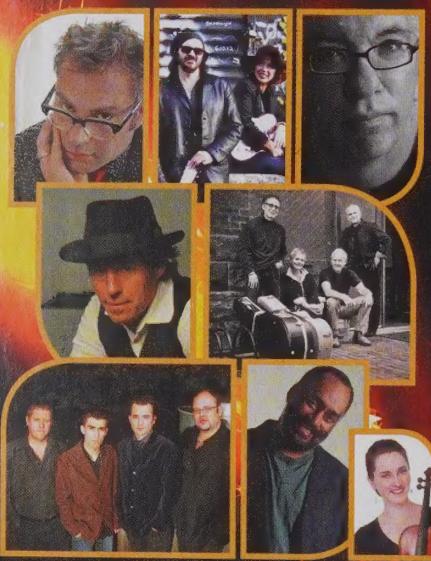
— David Lindley



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## Maria Dunn's All-time Top 10

**Paul Brady**  
The Liberty Tapes (Compass)

**Hazel Dickens and Alice Gerrard**  
Hazel and Alice (Rounder)

**Alasdair Fraser and Tony McManus**  
Return to Kintail (Culbinie Records)

**Dick Gaughan**  
Handful of Earth (Topic)

**Nanci Griffith**  
Other Voices Other Rooms (Elektra)

**Robin Hall and Jimmie MacGregor**  
One Over The Eight (Contour)

**Catherine Ann MacPhee**  
Chi Mi'N Geamhradh (Greentrax)

**Tim O'Brien**  
Fiddler's Green (Sugarhill)

**Larla O'Lionaird**  
The Seven Steps to Mercy (Real World)

**Solas**  
The Words That Remain (Shanachie)

Maria Dunn's latest release is *Piece By Piece*. Our feature on Maria runs on page 19.



## fred's records top 5

**1. Alan Doyle**  
Boy on Bridge (UNV)

**2. The Once**  
Row Upon Row Of The People They Know (Borealis)

**3. Dardanelles**  
Eastern Light (Independent)

**4. Katie Baggs**  
Home Again Home (Independent)

**5. The Once**  
The Once (Borealis)

Based on album sales for May, June and July at Freds Records, 198 Duckworth Street, St. John's, NL, A1C 1G5



## 10 Years Ago

- Beth Orton**  
Daybreaker (EMI)
- The Co-Dependents**  
Live Recording (Warner)
- DJ Cheb i Sabbah**  
Frishna Lila (Six Degrees)
- Harry Manx**  
Wise and Otherwise (NorthernBlues)
- The Co-Dependents**  
Live Recording (Warner)
- Eva Cassidy**  
Imagine (Blix Street)
- Norah Jones**  
Come Away With Me (Blue Note)
- Fred Eaglesmith**  
Falling Stars And Broken Hearts (Outside)
- Stephen Fearing**  
That's How I Walk (True North)
- Otis Taylor**  
Respect The Dead (NorthernBlues)

Compiled from all album sales on the Charts page in Penguin Eggs issue No. 15 published in the Autumn of 2002.

## groundfloor music top 10

- Gordon Lightfoot**  
All Live (Warners)
- Lyle Lovett**  
Release Me (Universal)
- Neil Young and Crazy Horse**  
Americana (Reprise)
- Leonard Cohen**  
Old Ideas (Columbia)
- The Tallest Man On Earth**  
There's No Leaving Now (Dead Oceans)
- Dr. John**  
Locked Down (Nonesuch)
- Royal Wood**  
We Were Born To Glory (MapleMusic)
- Fred Eaglesmith**  
6 Volts (A Major Label)
- Andrew Bird**  
Break It Yourself (Sony)
- Bruce Springsteen**  
Wrecking Ball (Sony)

Based on album sales for May, June and July at Groundfloor Music, 13 Quebec St., Guelph, ON, N1H 2T1

# highlife top 10

1. Various Artists  
Chimes Of Freedom: The Songs Of Bob Dylan (Amnesty International)
4. Dr. John  
Locked Down (Nonesuch)
3. Amadou & Mariam  
Folila (Nonesuch)
4. Patrick Watson  
Adventures In Your Own Backyard (Secret City)
5. Lee Fields  
Faithful Man (Truth & Soul)
6. Gary Clark Jr.  
Bright Lights EP (Warner)
7. Alabama Shakes  
Boys & Girls (ATO)
8. The Toure-Raichel Collective  
The Tel Aviv Session (Cumbancha)
9. Orkestar Slivovica  
Zivili (Orkestar Slivovica)
10. Jack White  
Blunderbuss (Third Man)



# sillions top 10

1. Lisa Leblanc  
Lisa Leblanc (Distribution Select)
2. Patrick Watson  
Adventures In Your Own Backyard (Secret City)
3. Norah Jones  
Little Broken Hearts (Deluxe)
4. Mes Aieux  
À l'aube du printemps (Disques Victoire)
5. Avec pas d'casque  
Astrominie (Distribution Select)
6. Leonard Cohen  
Old Ideas (Columbia)
7. Catherine Major  
Le Désert des solitudes (Select Canada)
4. Lila Downes  
Pecados Y Milagros (Columbia)
9. Barr Brothers  
Barr Brothers (Secret City Records)
10. Fred Pellerin  
C'est un monde (Disques Tempête)

Based on album sales for May, June and July at  
Sillions, 1149 Avenue Cartier, Quebec, QC, G1R 2S9.

# soundscapes top 10

1. Cold Specks  
I Predict A Graceful Expulsion (Arts & Crafts)
2. Michael Kiwanuka  
Home Again (Polydor)
3. Alabama Shakes  
Boys & Girls (ATO)
4. Great Lake Swimmers  
New Wild Everywhere (Nettwerk)
5. Patrick Watson  
Adventures In Your Own Backyard (Secret City)
6. Jack White  
Blunderbuss (Third Man)
7. Andre Williams & The Sadies  
Night & Day (Outside/Yep Roc)
8. Zeus  
Busting Visions (Arts & Crafts)
9. Kathleen Edwards  
Voyageur (MapleMusic)
10. Bahamas  
Barchords (Brushfire)

Based on album sales for May, June and July at  
Soundscapes, 572 College St., Toronto, On, M6G 1B3.

# ckua top 20

1. Del Barber  
Headwaters (Six Shooter)
2. Alejandro Escovedo  
Big Station (Concord)
3. Bonnie Raitt  
Slipstream (Redwing)
4. Joan Osborne  
Bring It On Home (Saguaro Road)
5. Leeroy Stagger  
Radiant Land (Rebelton)
6. Sara Watkins  
Sun Midnight Sun (Nonesuch)
7. Dar Williams  
In the Time Of Gods (Razor & Tie)
8. Jeremy Fisher  
Mint Juleps (Hidden Pony)
9. Royal Wood  
We Were Born To Glory (MapleMusic)
10. Jon Cleary  
Occapella (FHQ)
11. Cold Specks  
I Predict a Graceful Expulsion (Arts & Crafts)
12. Neil Young and Crazy Horse  
Americana (Reprise)
13. Dr. John  
Locked Down (Nonesuch)
14. Chris Smither  
Hundred Dollar Valentine (Signature Sounds)
15. Sierra Leone's Refugee All Stars  
Radio Salone (Cumbancha)
16. Shawn Colvin  
All Fall Down (Nonesuch)
17. Great Lake Swimmers  
New Wild Everywhere (Nettwerk)
18. Audra Mae and the Almighty Sound  
Audra Mae and the Almighty Sound (SideOneDummy)
19. Chuck Jackson's Big Bad Blues Band  
A Cup Of Joe (Linus Entertainment)
20. Jerry Douglas  
Traveler (Entertainment One)

Based on the most-played folk, roots and world music discs on CKUA  
radio - www.ckua.org throughout May, June and July.



Cold Specks



Leeroy Stagger

# News•Gossip•Rumour•Tattle

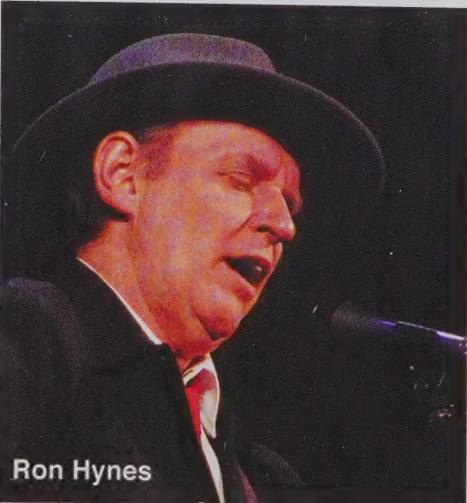
Iconic Newfoundland singer/songwriter and actor **Ron Hynes** began rigorous radiation and chemotherapy treatment in August for throat cancer.

"I'm staying positive and expecting the very best outcome at this time. Thanks to all for your concern and well-wishes," Hynes said in a statement released by his manager, **Lynn Horne**.

All of his scheduled shows for the rest of the year have been cancelled, including an appearance at the Lunenburg Folk Festival. He did, however, perform as part of the **The Wonderful Grand Band** at an emotional, sold-out Mile One Centre, Aug. 11, in St. John's, NL. His guests included **Alan Doyle** of **Great Big Sea**, **Hey Rosetta** and **Amelia Curran**.

"I think his spirits are good," Horne told the St. John's Telegram, when asked how Hynes was feeling. "Ron's a fighter and he's a man of great faith."

Hynes earned a Genie Award, which honours outstanding achievements in Canadian cinema, for his song *The Final Breath* used in the film *A Secret Nation*. He has also appeared as **Johnny Shea** in the CBC-TV sitcom series *Dooley Gardens*. But he is best known for songs like *Sonny's Dream*, which was covered by the likes of **Emmylou Harris**, **Christy Moore** and **Hamish Imlach**.



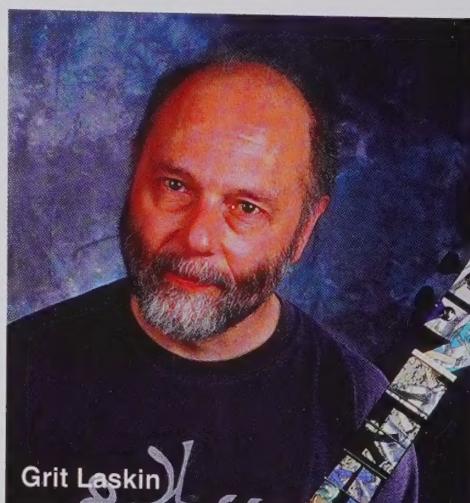
Ron Hynes

Governor General **David Johnston** announced, June 29, that **William (Grit) Laskin** will receive the Order of Canada—the country's highest civilian honour—at a future ceremony at Rideau Hall in Ottawa, ON. Laskin was recognized "for his contributions as a musician, and internationally recognized instrument builder, and for his promotion of folk music in Canada".

"It took me totally by surprise," says Laskin. "How could you not be honoured. I'm in such August company... The most excited person on the planet is my mother at 94. Within 14 seconds of hearing I was to receive this honour, she had told most of North America."

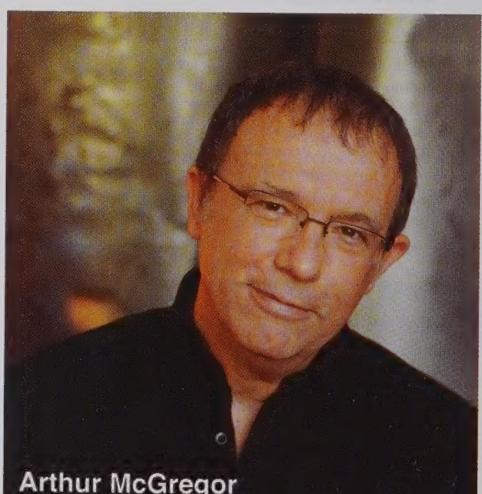
Laskin is one of the world's finest guitar makers, a co-owner of Canada's premier folk label, Borealis Records, a co-founder of the Canadian Folk Music Awards, an author, and a renowned musician and songwriter. While he has remained a member of the band **The Friends of Fiddler's Green** for almost 40 years, he has also recorded with the likes of **Stan Rogers** and **Tamarack** and his songs have been covered by artists such as **Pete Seeger** and **The Tannahill Weavers**.

*Editor's note: Grit Laskin is one of the finest and inspirational human beings I have ever met and is fully deserving of this wonderful honour. Congratulations, Grit – RC.*



Grit Laskin

Veteran folk music aficionado **Arthur McGregor** will receive the Estelle Klein Award at a gala dinner during the 26th annual OCFF Conference in Mississauga, ON, Oct. 11-14. Proprietor of the Ottawa Folklore Centre, co-founder of the Canadian Folk Music Awards, musician, a veteran folk music promoter, musician and music teacher, McGregor's active interest in folk music first surfaced in Germany in 1967. His father's company transferred the family to Strasbourg and Canadian Forces Base Baden Soellingen was the closest Canadian high school. There he organized and played in the Eve of Destruction Cafe with his folk band **1917**—a name that went over big in Cold War Europe. Back in Canada, he organized folk nights at his Sarnia, ON, high school, Northern Collegiate, ran The Pit Coffee House at Sarnia's YMCA, and helped organize the city's first folk festival. Upon his move to Ottawa's Carleton University, he started Rooster's Coffee House and ran it for three years. Organizing music lessons at Le Hibou—the legendary Ottawa coffee house—opened the door to him launching the Ottawa Folklore Centre in October 1976. McGregor plays and teaches guitar, autoharp, dulcimer, mandolin, bodhran, and banjo, and performs solo and as a duo with his wife, **Wendy Moore**, and tours with Wendy's children's show, **The Celtic**



Arthur McGregor

**Rathskallions.** Apparently, he plays a mean ragtime version of *O, Canada* to open every Ottawa Folk Festival. He also co-founded the Canadian Folk Music Awards in 2005 and remains on its organizing committee.

The Estelle Klein Award honours the work of an individual or group that has made significant contributions to Ontario's folk music community. Past recipients include **Stan Rogers**, **Sylvia Tyson** and **Sharon, Lois and Bram**.



Sad news from the U.K.: *Word* magazine has folded. The August issue released in July is its last. All five full-time staff have been made redundant. Published in London, it ran monthly for 114 issues and was voted U.K. Music Magazine of the Year in 2007 and 2008. Widely regarded for its insightful and intelligent editorial content, its core tastes were singer-songwriters, roots rock and old-fashioned soul.

The magazine's editor, **David Hepworth**, issued a statement on the *Word* website citing the "dramatic changes" in both the publishing and music industries in recent years, along with the current economic downturn, as the reasons for the closure.



A limited-edition photographic study of the enigmatic English singer-songwriter **Nick Drake** is now available for a mere £395 (\$600) plus shipping. *I Saw Nick Drake* features the work of photographer **Keith Morris**, who took portraits of Drake throughout three sessions between April 1969 and November 1971. Drake died in 1974 as a result of an accidental overdose of sleeping pills, aged 26. He suffered greatly from depression and insomnia. While Drake's sombre three albums, *Five Leaves*

*Left* (1969), *Bryter Layter* (1970), and *Pink Moon* (1972), garnered little recognition initially, they have evolved into cult classics inspiring the likes of **R.E.M.**, **Kate Bush**, **Lucinda Williams** and **Martha Wainwright**. His work gained further popularity when his songs *Pink Moon* and *From The Morning* were used for Volkswagen and AT&T television commercials.

*I Saw Nick Drake* includes almost 200 photographs and measures 24 inches by 36 inches when opened. Five hundred copies are available worldwide from Ormond Yard Press. For information, go to [www.snapgalleries.com/oyp/nickdrake/](http://www.snapgalleries.com/oyp/nickdrake/)



**Bernie Finkelstein** will provide the keynote speech at the 25th annual International Folk Alliance Conference, Feb. 20-24, 2013, in Toronto, ON.

Finkelstein, interviewed in issue No. 54 of *Penguin Eggs*, founded True North Records—one of the first independent record labels in Canada—and helped shape the modern Canadian music industry. He also managed the likes of **Bruce Cockburn**, **Murray McLauchlan** and **Dan Hill**. Finkelstein has just published his memoirs, *True North: A Life In The Music Industry*.

This marks Folk Alliance's first appearance in Canada since Montreal in 2005. It annually brings together more than 2,000 artists and music industry professionals and features more than 200 juried music showcases.



*Ballads, Blues, and Bluegrass*, a film documenting a late-night New York hootenany hosted by folklorist **Alan Lomax** in 1961, premiered at the Los Angeles Film Festival

in June. It features an amazing array of singers and musicians including **Willie Dixon**, **Memphis Slim**, **Doc Watson**, **Clarence Ashley**, **Roscoe Holcomb**, and the **New Lost City Ramblers** performing in Lomax's Greenwich Village apartment.

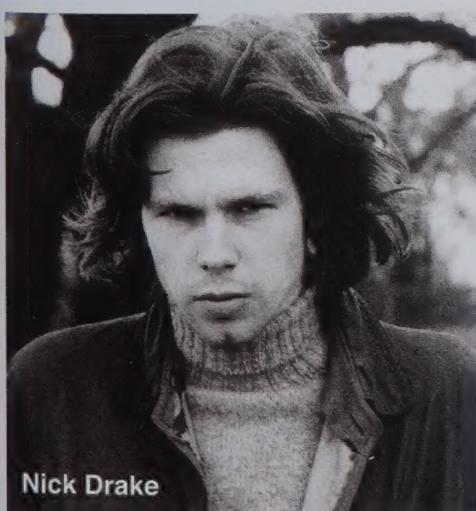
The 37-minute film was initially made for a BBC Television broadcast in the U.K. but never aired. Lomax's daughter, **Anna Lomax Wood**, who was in attendance at the L.A. screening, said the film was patched together from all the footage shot on that night. "It was planned about two hours before it happened," she said of the film, which was edited together a few years later but drew no interest and has been sitting in storage ever since. To watch a six-minute trailer of this intriguing period film go to [www.youtube.com/watch?v=qDIE3tX8d5Q](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qDIE3tX8d5Q)



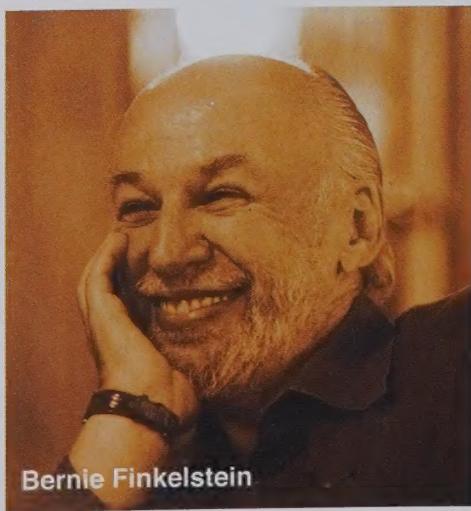
The influential initial *Penguin Book of English Folk Songs* first appeared in 1959, under the editorship of **Ralph Vaughan Williams** and **A.L. Lloyd**. It provided a treasure trove of material for the folk revival's traditional singers and musicians. Now, more than 50 years later, the publication of *The New Penguin Book of English Folk Songs* holds similar bounty. The folklorist **Steve Roud** and musicologist **Julia Bishop** have edited more than 500 pages and 151 songs, which come with sheet music and notes. Separated into 10 thematic parts, opening with soldiers and sailors, it proceeds through songs of love, lust, work, animals, nonsense, death, crime, and religion. It's available at [www.amazon.ca](http://www.amazon.ca) for \$22.57.



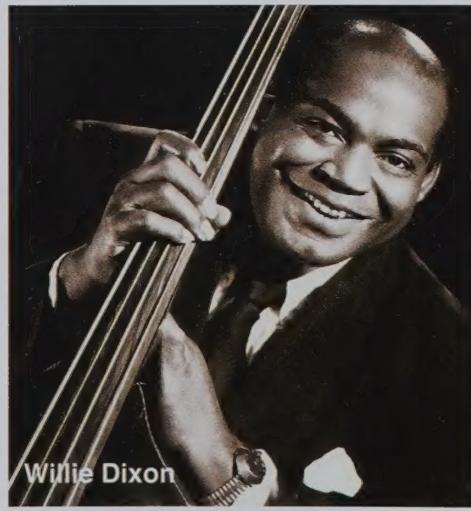
The National Endowment for the Arts, the United States' highest honour in the



**Nick Drake**



**Bernie Finkelstein**



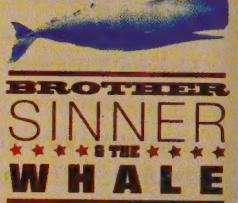
**Willie Dixon**



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**KELLY JOE PHELPS**



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Digging up the ground he broke on "Roll Away The Stone,"

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# JIM BYRNES

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deeply soulful"

— British Blues Connection

I HEAR THE WIND IN THE WIRES  
**JIM BYRNES**

IT'S RAININ' ON DUSTY ROADS CHANGIN' AND LYIN' MAN BLUE RODEO FREDIE MERCURY ROLLING STONES

FATHER OF BLUESSES ■ THE RAILROAD STORE ■ DON'T LET HER GO ■ BIG IRON

SHOOTER JAG ■ FARMER OF LOVE ■ HOUSE WHERE HARRY LIVES ■ HONEY TONE BLUES

I HEAR THE WIND IN THE WIRES

Released worldwide on  
September 18

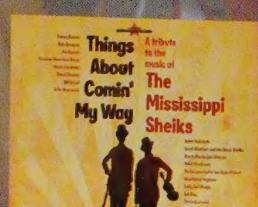
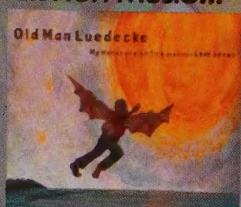
**Juno Award-winning** blues singer **Jim Byrnes**

walks the line between country, soul and blues

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**FACTOR**

THE FOUNDATION ASSISTING CANADIAN ARTISTS ON RECORDED

ARTISTS

Canada

folk and traditional arts, announced its 2012 recipients in June. The list includes Tejano accordion player **Flaco Jiménez**, Dobro master **Mike Auldrige** and klezmer clarinetist, mandolinist and composer **Andy Statman**. The NEA National Heritage Fellows recognizes folk and traditional artists for their artistic excellence and efforts to conserve the United States of America's culture for future generations. The fellowships include a one-time award of \$25,000.



After 30 years of constant touring, **J.P. Cormier** has decided to retire from the road and dedicate his creative energies to composing and record production.

On his website Cormier discusses his frustration with the time limits imposed when pursuing musical ideas constrained by the constant need to tour.

"My wish now, in my 43rd year, is to immerse myself completely in the study of my craft," says Cormier. "I intend to focus all of the energies that have been elsewhere these past years on finding and stretching the boundaries of what is physically and intellectually possible for the steel string guitar, the fiddle, the banjo, and all of the instruments I play."

Cormier has just released a collection of new songs, *Somewhere in the Back of My Heart*, an album he describes as "getting back to basics."



As part of the ongoing evolution of the Canmore Folk Music Festival, **Kurt Bagnell**, the former manager of presentations at the Banff Centre, will immediately join the festival's administration staff.

**Sue Panning**, the current CFMF artistic director, spearheaded this initiative upon hearing of Kurt's decision to retire from the Banff Centre—a cultural haven in the Rocky Mountains. The pair will work together in the coming year. Bagnell will assume the mantle of festival director and Panning will aid, consult and advise him.

"I am absolutely exhilarated and honoured to be involved in this festival and look forward to working with, and learning from, the many dedicated staff and volunteers who have helped make this festival so special," says Bagnell.



Folk Music Canada will honour outstanding national folk community pioneers with an annual Innovator Award. The first recipient will be announced at the 2012 Canadian Folk Music Awards, in Saint John, NB, on Nov. 17. It will recognize new and innovative approaches making an impact on Canadian folk music. Nominees can come from any part of the community.

Submissions must be received by Sept. 21 and can be made online, through Folk Music Canada ([folkmusiccanada.ca](http://folkmusiccanada.ca)). While there is no fee to submit a nomination, the person submitting the nomination must be a member of Folk Music Canada.



New York City's Historic Landmarks Preservation Center has placed a ceramic memorial plaque outside **Odetta**'s former home at 1270 Fifth Ave. near 108th Street. The center's cultural medallion program commemorates individuals who have made a contribution to the city's cultural history. With her rich voice and emotionally evocative singing, Odetta not only

inspired singers such as **Harry Belafonte**, **Janis Joplin** and **Joan Baez** but also civil rights activists like **Rosa Parks** and **Martin Luther King Jr.** Odetta died in 2008 due to heart complications.



The International Bluegrass Music Association will celebrate the 40th anniversary of the **Nitty Gritty Dirt Band**'s seminal triple album, *Will The Circle Be Unbroken*, at its annual World of Bluegrass convention in Nashville, TN, Sept. 26. Recorded in 1972, this landmark recording brought together **Mother Maybelle Carter**, **Doc Watson**, **Earl Scruggs**, **Merle Travis**, **Vassar Clements**, **Norman Blake**, **Jimmy Martin**, **Roy Acuff**, and others with the then popular country-folk-rock group. The three records were considered a bridge to bluegrass and old-time music for rock audiences. The Dirt Band's **John McEuen** will host a discussion about the album in Nashville. Rarely seen photographs of the recording sessions, mostly shot by producer **William E. McEuen**, will also be on display. And McEuen will perform songs from the album with as yet unannounced special guests.



Finland's **Värttinä** will receive the WOMEX 12 Award at the annual WOMEX conference in Thessaloniki, Greece, Sept. 17-21. They will perform at the event Sunday morning Oct. 21. Since its inception in 1999, the award recognizes artists' musical excellence, social importance, commercial success, political impact and lifetime achievement. Värttinä will celebrate 30 years as a band in 2013. Vocalist Mari Kaasinen remains the only original member.



Odetta



Värttinä

# Swansongs



## Doc Watson 1923-2012

Doc Watson, the flat-picker extraordinaire whose gentle manner and exceptional talent charmed a generation, died at age 89 on May 29, 2012, in Winston-Salem, NC, writes Doug Swanson, after complications from abdominal surgery.

Born Arthel Lane Watson in Stoney Fork, NC, on March 3, 1923, he grew up in the nearby small community of Deep Gap in the Blue Ridge Mountains. As an infant he contracted an eye infection and went blind. But he came from a musical family and with their encouragement he took up the harmonica and banjo. At 13 his father bought him his first guitar—a \$12 Stella—after he dropped out of Governor Morehead School for the Blind in Raleigh, NC.

Watson's life would change forever, however, in 1960, when the folklorist Ralph Rinzler discovered banjo player Clarence Ashley in Union Grove, NC, and persuaded him to do a recording session. Ashley promptly put together a band made up of the best local musicians, which included Watson on guitar. Suitably impressed by his incredible flat picking, Rinzler subsequently went to Watson's home and recorded him with his family.

These sessions would produce two albums—*Old Time Music at Clarence*

Ashley's

and *The Watson Family* released

on Moses Asch's Folkways label.

A year later, Ashley, Watson and two other participants in the Ashley sessions, Clint Howard and Fred Price, performed in Greenwich Village at the behest of the Friends of Old-Time Music. Then in 1963 and 1964, at Rinzler's instigation, Watson appeared at the Newport Folk Festival. Interest from these high-profile appearances led Watson to turn solo and play the U.S. college and coffee house circuits.

He acquired the nickname Doc when a radio announcer suggested he needed something with more sizzle and a live audience member shouted out the name that stuck.

Watson married Rosa Lee Carlton in 1947 and their first child, Merle, followed his father's musical path and eventually became an integral part of the band, starting in 1964. Merle was killed in a tractor accident in 1985 at the age of 36, after making 20 albums with his father.

Watson's lightning-fast picking emulated the uptempo sounds of the fiddle and banjo, lifting the guitar from a rhythm instrument into a lead role. But as his popularity waned with interest in folk music, his appearance on the 1972 critically lauded Nitty Gritty Dirt Band album *Will The Circle Be Unbroken* with the likes of Maybelle Carter, Merle Travis, and Earl Scruggs

renewed interest in Watson's career.

His open-minded approach to musical styles saw him influenced by jazz, blues, gospel and the mountain music he grew up with. He and Merle won Grammy Awards for *Then And Now* (1974), *Two Days In November* (1975) and *Big Sandy/Leather Britches* (1980). After Merle's death, Doc quit touring but won Grammys for *Riding the Midnight Train* (1987), *On Praying Ground* (1991) and *Legacy* (2003). In 2003, he won the Grammy for best country instrumental performance for *Whiskey Before Breakfast* with Bryan Sutton. President Bill Clinton presented him with the National Medal of Arts at the White House in 1997.

Doc Watson is survived by his wife; a daughter, Nancy Ellen; a brother, David; two grandchildren and numerous great-grandchildren.

## Kitty Wells 1919-2012

Acknowledged as "The Queen of Country Music", Kitty Wells almost single-handedly established the commercial worth of female country singers. It happened largely as a result of her 1952 smash hit *It Wasn't God Who Made Honky Tonk Angels*—an answer song to Hank Thompson's hugely popular *The Wild Side Of Life* and its lyrical



treatment of seductive, wayward women. Wells's single retorted, "It's a shame that all the blame is on us women." The record's message was controversial at the time, and was banned by many radio stations including NBC. She was also banned from singing it on the Grand Ole Opry.

However, its success (800,000 copies sold) meant Wells was the first woman to record a No. 1 country hit. As a result, she paved the way for the likes of Patsy Cline, Loretta Lynn, Tammy Wynette and Dolly Parton. Kitty Wells died July 12 at her home in Madison, TN. She was 92, writes Roddy Campbell.

Born Muriel Ellen Deason in Nashville on Aug. 30, 1919, her father, a brakeman for the Tennessee Central Railroad, played guitar and sang folk songs. Kitty learned to play the guitar at 14 and made her singing debut on the radio in 1936. She married Johnnie Wright the following year and the couple performed with his sister, Louise, as Johnnie Wright and the Harmony Girls. In 1939, they added Jack Anglin, a singer who wed Louise that year. As the singing duo Johnnie and Jack, Kitty was their featured "girl singer". Together they appeared on some of the biggest radio hoedowns of the day, including *Louisiana Hayride* and the weekly *Grand Ole Opry* broadcast. Wright suggested that she adopt the stage name Kitty Wells, drawn from an old folk ballad *Sweet Kitty Wells* made popular by the Pickard Family. By the time she recorded *Honky Tonk Angels*, Wells was ready to retire and devote herself to her three children. However, she went on to place 84 singles on the country charts, 38 of them in the Top 10, between 1952 and 1965. While she spent more than 20 years with Decca Records, she left to join Capricorn Records in 1974 and made the album *Forever Young* with the Allman Brothers Band. While it was not a commercial success, she received considerable acclaim and, through its association with the Allmans, brought Wells attention from a younger audience.

She was elected to the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1976. And in 1991 the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences presented her with a lifetime achievement award. Wells and Wright retired Dec. 31, 2000, after a final concert at the Nashville Nightlife Theater. Johnnie died in 2011 aged 97.



The Dillards: Doug Dillard second from right

## Doug Dillard 1937-2012

One of the most popular and influential bluegrass bands of the '60s, The Dillards mixed folk with bluegrass and country that attracted young revivalist audiences. Led by brothers Rodney (guitar and vocals) and Doug (banjo) Dillard, they gained further prominence and widespread exposure as occasional guest stars on *The Andy Griffith Show* as the mountain family The Darlings.

While they released their debut *Back Porch Bluegrass* in 1963, their third album, *Pickin' and Fiddlin'*, two years later announced their future intentions as it featured celebrated fiddler Byron Berline—a bold move since fiddle music had long lost its lustre. By the time they released *Wheatstraw Suite* in 1968, Doug had left the band, replaced by Herb Pederson, but it featured orchestral string arrangements, drums and pedal steel guitar. While Doug and Rodney played on the soundtrack for the movie *Bonnie and Clyde* in 1967, they parted ways due to musical differences. Doug, however, teamed up with former Byrd Gene Clark to explore country rock and wound up in the southern California vanguard that produced the likes of Poco, The Flying Burrito Brothers and The Eagles.

Doug Dillard died May 17 in Nashville, TN, after a lengthy illness. He was 75, writes Roddy Campbell.

Born March 6, 1937, in Salem, MO, he started playing guitar at age five, and took up the banjo at fifteen. Doug patterned his

picking on the playing of Earl Scruggs, and had even written fan letters to the legend during his formative years. In 1958, the brothers recorded their very first single, *Banjo In The Hollow*, for K-Ark Records, a label based in St. Louis. They would move to California in the early '60s and sign with Elektra. The Dillards would go on to tour with the likes of Bob Dylan, Joan Baez and Elton John.

As a solo performer, Doug recorded numerous solo albums, including *The Banjo Album* (1969), which featured guest John Hartford, contributed to the soundtracks of such movies as *The Vanishing Point* and *The Rose* and scored commercials for companies like 7-Up and Kentucky Fried Chicken. In 2009, The Dillards were inducted into the International Bluegrass Music Association's Hall Of Fame.

**Penguin Eggs** also notes other passings in brief: **Scott McKenzie**, best known for his 1967 hit single *San Francisco (Be Sure To Wear Some Flowers In Your Hair)*, died Aug. 18. He was 73. **Susanna Clark**, wife of Guy Clark and a talented songwriter in her own right, died June 27, aged 73. Susanna wrote hits for the likes of Emmylou Harris, Kathy Mattea and Roseanne Cash. English journalist **Jan Fairley** died June 9. She was 63. Fairley wrote largely about world music for the likes of *jRoots*, *Songlines* and *The Guardian*.

# The Big Buzz



Belle Starr

## Belle Starr

Take three frenetic fiddlers—one of them a step-dance champ—with harmonious voices that range the octaves, put them in the same room and what do you get? Belle Starr, a new all-female trio of veteran Canadian roots musicians named after the famed Wild West outlaw.

Before its birth last year, Belle Starr was brewing for awhile below the surface. The group is Ontarians Miranda Mulholland and Stephanie Cadman along with West Coast strings sensation Kendel Carson. The band's debut EP (*The Burning of Atlanta*) was released this past summer. The five-song tease from these lovely ladies was recorded mainly in Toronto, partly at the Lincoln County Social Club and partly at The Woodshed (Blue Rodeo's studio) with the help of producer Russell Broom (Jann Arden).

After a couple of mini-tours—that included a hectic summer hitting the outdoor festival circuit with Belle Starr across Canada—Mulholland is happy to get a brief respite from the sun back in Toronto when we chit-chat for a bit on a cloudy day in mid-August to talk about this exciting collaboration.

"It's a nice change," she says. "We've

usually been the only girls in the various bands we've played in, so to get a chance to tour with each other is great. We've all subbed in on the same projects before, but we never got to hang out. The whole idea was to see what could happen if we were all in the same room for once."

So how did this talented trio finally end up in the same room? It was thanks to a friend of Mulholland's (Joel Stewart) who works for CMT. All the gals were at the Country Music Awards a couple of years ago when Stewart suggested they combine their talents and see what might happen. The rest, as they say, is history.

"We didn't know what it would become but as soon as we started singing together it became clear it was going to be something special," Mulholland comments. "Our voices are really different. I have a high voice, Steph has a low voice, and Kendel falls somewhere in the middle ... it was really spooky the first time we sang together."

*The Burning of Atlanta* is a collection of covers. The trio landed on the final songs after a few "fisticuffs," Mulholland laughs. Joking aside, the final five made the cut after each musician put forward a few of their favourite tunes for consideration.

"We wanted to start writing stuff together

but coming together for the first time it's hard ... you don't want to jump into something that is manufactured or feels fake," the musician explains. "We didn't know each other that well musically, so to explore our kinks and how we work together, we thought it best to first bring to the table our favourite songs."

Mulholland suggested the cover cut, written by her good friend Jenny Whiteley. Other tracks include a Fred Eaglesmith tune (*Summerlea*), an Oh Susanna song (*Little White Lies*), and the Dolly Parton classic *Jolene*. The whole recording process was very organic, says Mulholland.

"We tried them in different ways and certain voices just gravitated to certain parts."

Looking ahead, Belle Starr already has a follow-up full-length disc in the can. While Mulholland was a bit coy on that grey August day when probed about the forthcoming record, she did offer a couple of details. It was mastered by engineer extraordinaire Bob Ludwig (Rolling Stones, David Bowie, The Who, etc.) and will land early in 2013.

"We've got some cool instrumentals and some other favourite songs of ours ... it's a real mixed bag," she concludes.

[www.bellestarr.ca](http://www.bellestarr.ca)

—By David McPherson

## Wesley Hardisty

Wesley Hardisty is an 18-year-old fiddler from Fort Simpson, NWT, who is combining aboriginal, rock, country and traditional folk influences to produce music that will grab your attention. In his brief career he has already performed at the Vancouver 2010 Olympics, at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Inuvik and for the U.K. Royals Will and Kate. He was also selected by the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network's *Breaking New Beats* as one of the top 10 young Aboriginal talents in North America. He has also just been nominated for an Aboriginal People's Choice Award.

"I just graduated from high school—then I headed back up to my home town of Fort Simpson. Then I did a six-date teaching tour of aboriginal communities, and then a week-long fiddle camp in Yellowknife, and some other shows along the way."



Wesley Hardisty

His musical career began when he saw his cousin playing at fiddle camp in his hometown five years ago. "I was captivated and stayed and listened and by the end of the night I asked if I could join the fiddle group ... and then in a week I got my own fiddle." The fiddle camp was organized by the Kole Crook Fiddler Association, in memory of a young Metis fiddler killed in a car crash.

It turned out that the Saltspring Island fiddler Zav RT was teaching there. That led to him attending her fiddle camp on that beautiful B.C. gulf island and to his eventual move there. "I have been on Saltspring for three years and I am loving it. It has been so warm and welcoming. It is very spiritual place for the music."

He auditioned and was accepted into the prestigious Gulf Islands School for Performing Arts. "GISPA is a school within a school that teaches theatre, dance and music. It is an amazing program. It has been a huge contributor to my stage craft and creative development."

His first CD, *12:12*, came out in May 2011 and features his GISPA colleagues Wallabee Indeed and Victoria's boy wonder guitarist Quinn Bachand. The music covers a lot of styles. In a world where many

young fiddlers seek to impress by playing as hard and fast as possible, its subtlety and maturity is refreshing. He has a lightness of touch and a delicacy to his phrasing that sets him apart. He is planning to release a new CD next year and is working towards going to university to study contemporary music.

"After doing this teaching tour I want to continue to give workshops to aboriginal youth—both for fiddle and as an inspirational speaker." He has found them to be a very receptive audience and is deeply aware of the great disparity between many First Nations communities and the rest of Canada. He has discovered he is able to use his own story to inspire them to believe in their own potential. "It is a new outgrowth from music. I am really enjoying it and I want to continue the work."

So remember the name, Wesley Hardisty—fiddler, songwriter, multi-instrumentalist, inspirational speaker, role model and recording artist. I'm sure we are going to be hearing a lot more from him in the years to come—just remember you read it here first!

— By Tim Readman

## Van Django

**H**umour and wit are essential components of Van Django's approach to

music. The acoustic swing quartet's new album is titled *Waltz In The Shape Of A Tree*, a nod to eccentric French pianist of yore Erik Satie. And a similarly light-hearted attitude is clearly reflected in the names of original tunes by members of the band—*I'll See You In My Badass Dreams*, *Django TV*, *Legless Chicken from Montezuma*, and *Bollywacka*, for starters.

The playfulness is very much in the spirit of Django Reinhardt, the manouche Gypsy swing guitarist who was the toast of Europe in the '30s and '40s with his outfit the Quintette du Hot Club de France, and provides the Vancouver-based band's enduring inspiration.

"A lot of guys like to play this music really straight," says guitarist Budge Schachte, interviewed with colleagues Cam Wilson (violin), Finn Manniche (cello and guitar), and Brent Gubbels (bass), after a rehearsal. "We like to mess with it a bit to make it our own."

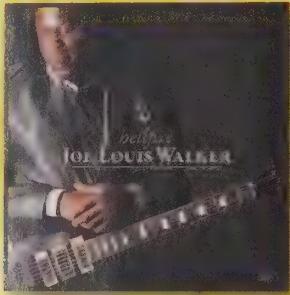
While Reinhardt is just the starting point for the band's explorations, the musicians never stray too far, tonally or stylistically, from the mercurial Belgian—who lost two fingers of his left hand in a fire and created a new harmonic world with the remainder. Though the tree-shaped album only bears one of his tunes, *Nuits de Saint Germain des Prés*, they feature in all Van Django's live shows.

And sly quotes from his music work their



Van Django

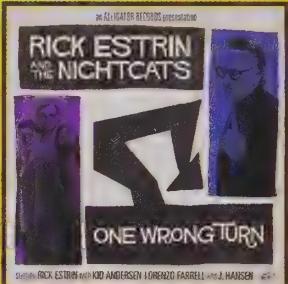
# RAW, ROOTED AND ROAD TESTED



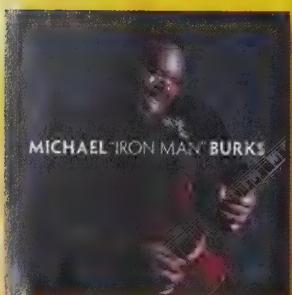
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## The Big Buzz



Dale Boyle

der *Where My Baby Is Tonight*, a swing standard from the '20s and *Exactly Like You* from the '30s. We take his arrangement, in fact. And for *That Old Black Magic* we use the arrangement by Jerry Lewis in *The Nutty Professor* and throw in some of [Edith Piaf's] *La Vie En Rose* over the top.

"We steal and borrow shamelessly," says Schachte, with a laugh.

—By Tony Montague

## Dale Boyle

Dale Boyle doesn't own a cell-phone. He may not have realized how unusual that was until he asked a class he was teaching at McGill who in the room didn't own one. His was the only hand up. Boyle is not a fan of how technology and social media has insinuated itself in our lives.

"There's too much of everything and nothing of your own. I withdraw from the whole thing, Twitter and Facebook and everything."

That's not to say that Boyle is a technophobe. He produced his latest CD himself but his production on *Throwback* reflects his quasi-rejection of the hectic pace of the connected world. "The stripped down sound was a choice, not something driven by budget. I was acting as my own producer, and for the first time ever mixed it myself, which drove me half crazy. Most of the album was done in a corner of my bedroom."

way into witty medleys, like the theme from *Nuages* in *Django TV*, the most elaborately constructed of the pieces on *Waltz In The Shape Of A Tree*. The medley includes the themes from shows such as *Perry Mason*, *Spider-Man*, *Mission Impossible*, *Rocky* and *Bullwinkle*, as well as snippets of jazz standards such as the Gershwin's *I Got Rhythm*, the Dave Brubeck hit *Take 5* and Duke Ellington's *It Don't Mean a Thing (If it ain't got that swing)*. *The Flintstones* cartoon theme feels particularly good with a Djangoesque facelift.

Van Django also performs original tunes written by different band members in the swing vein, such as Maniche's title track to *Waltz*, Wilson's legless Mexican chicken and the cinematic *Bollywacka*.

Not all the vintage music the quartet plays with is Reinhardt's. *I'll See You In My Badass Dreams* takes Isham Jones and Gus Kahn's 1924 hit *I'll See You In My Dreams* and cruelly inserts a razor-sharp quote from the soundtrack to Alfred Hitchcock's classic horror flick *Psycho*. "We've also added more stuff since we recorded it—a dream sequence that sounds like Philip Glass or some new music texture," says Schachte. "We all arranged it as a group, as we usually do."

"We do a lot of tunes that weren't by Django but which he played, like *I Won-*

The result is an acoustic album where the songs are the stars. The project was three years in the making. "It was organic in a sense. Some of the tracks were demos that I either was going to re-record or just plain demos and at some point I realized, 'There it was'."

About three years ago Boyle got in touch with former Wailin' Jennys' vocalist Annabelle Chvostek.

"*You Might Come Around* started as something I was going to sing on my own, and then I felt it worked better as a duet. I was happy to be able to contact her two-and-a-half years after I first got in touch and say, 'I am not some freak who found you on the Internet, I really am putting together an album'."

Chvostek recorded her vocals and sent them to Boyle, who wove them into a poetic piece of music. Similarly the elegantly simple *All Gone Now* has been a work in progress for years. That's something that Boyle thinks is a contributing factor to the musical growth of this project compared with some of his earlier work.

"This is different. I think the songs are better, the arrangements are better... maybe it's because I sat with the songs longer and they had a better incubation period."

Boyle's songs and vocals are often favourably compared to Steve Earle, an association that he finds flattering. His musical roots, though, go farther back. Growing up in the Gaspé, he was greatly influenced by old-time country, roots and blues and the likes of Tom T. Hall. "As a teenager, like every teenager, I rebelled but it had seeped into my soul."

Boyle's music is a reflection of who he was growing up and who he has become—a PhD in Educational Studies. His research (lightly titled *Exploring a University Teacher's Approach to Incorporating Music in a Cognition Psychology Course*) was strongly influenced by his academic mentor, Dr. Daniel Levitan. Boyle and Levitan were recently featured in the documentary *What Makes a Masterpiece*.

— By Ruth Blakely

## The Staves

Watford lies 18 miles north of London—a smallish town with a few claims to musical fame, including a Spice Girl (Ginger) and a drum & bass producer (LTJ Bukem.)

It's the very last stop on the London tube, a long journey to make but as anyone who has ever lived outside of a large city knows, the urge to get out can be strong.

"I never felt like we were part of any scene, because we've always been kind of isolated," says Emily Stavely-Taylor of Watford's The Staves. "We always felt like outsiders but the more we gigged in London the more we'd naturally run into people who were doing the same thing. We were all at the same venues on the same nights, and you'd get to know people."

These "people" include acts like Mumford & Sons, bands that are part of the



**The Staves**

current British folk scene. Working like indie-rockers outside the system, releasing a few records on their own before Atlantic snapped them up last year, they've now found themselves on the inside. The sisters (Emily, Jessica, Camilla) have become prized backup vocalists for a range of artists, from Tom Jones to Fionn Regan; they've been added as an opening act on tours for the likes of Bon Iver, Josh Ritter and James Vincent McMorrow.

By their own account the sisters weren't necessarily folkies when they first picked up their instruments. The three took their cues from their parents, and counted records from many of the obvious sources: The Beatles, Dylan, James Taylor, Joni Mitchell, Simon and Garfunkel. Albums found in the libraries of many parents coming of age at the time, singer-songwriters with a foot in the folk boom of the '60s though not exclusively so.

"It seems like such a hot topic," Emily observes. "It can be quite controversial; people have different opinions on what folk means or can mean. 'That's not real folk music,' or 'That's not traditional'." She laughs. "When people ask us if we're a folk band, I never know how to respond."

"I always associated it with being political, the music of the people," Camilla wryly supplies.

"Yeah; storytelling, songs about shipwrecks, coal miners or someone dying," says Emily.

"It's hard to describe what you do," she adds. "That sounds pretentious but it is,

because if you say something like 'folk' or 'country' then that sends people's minds in one place."

"I heard you say something the other day that I liked," Jessica interrupts. "'Imagine the best thing you ever heard and times it by 10'."

The Staves probably wouldn't deny that they fit in quite nicely with the Laurel Canyon vibe of the early to mid '70s, California folk mixed with soft rock, emphasis on the harmonies. That could possibly be why producer and engineer Glyn Johns (Linda Ronstadt, Emmylou Harris) found them so intriguing and decided to take a chance on co-recording them with his son, Ethan.

"It happened in a very natural way," Emily supplies. "We met Ethan and Glyn at a Travelodge, and it wasn't like they were looking for us. We were unsigned and unmanaged, and we all had a chance to suss each other out. It was their first time working together as well; Glyn is very hands on and has mad amounts of energy, Ethan is the same but maybe a bit more hippy-ish. They seem to do well together."

The album, *Dead & Born & Grown*, is slated for release in October 2012; meanwhile they have their tour with Bon Iver and an audience to build in North America.

"The new record definitely feels like a game changer, a step up," Emily says. "We didn't really fight about anything with Ethan or Glyn on anything; we've been doing this for awhile now, and I think we're good at trusting our own instincts."

— By Tom Murray



Rodney Crowell

## Kin Folk

With two new albums and an internationally acclaimed autobiography to his recent credit, Nashville citizen Rodney Crowell has much to mull over with our Mike Sadava.

**A**s one of America's most distinguished songwriters throughout the past 35 years, Rodney Crowell, the Grammy-winning composer of such songs as 'Til I Can Take Control Again or Ain't Living Long Like This, still retains a creative hunger for new artistic endeavors.

For starters, he has just released *KIN*, a songwriting collaboration with poet, English professor and best-selling author Mary Karr. It features such guests as Kris Kristofferson, Norah Jones and Lucinda Williams.

He has also recorded an album of duets with Emmylou Harris and still retains a busy tour schedule.

To top it off, the Texas native has plunged into the world of books, publish-

ing *Chinaberry Sidewalks*, his colourful, touching memoir about growing up in a hard-scrabble, often violent hillbilly family in Houston.

Crowell's autobiography offers nothing about his years of touring with Emmylou, or marrying into country music royalty and becoming the son-in-law of Johnny Cash, or producing Roseanne Cash records. During a recent interview before a performance at the Edmonton Folk Music Festival, Crowell, looking at least a decade younger than his 62 years, explains the nearly total omission of his music career in his auto-biography.

"Writing about my career would have been thumbing my nose at the writers who work at it day in and day out. To write about the career I've had without really capturing the craft would have been disrespectful."

Besides, it wouldn't have been that interesting, he adds. If he was Paul McCartney or Keith Richards, he might have had some great stories to tell, but Rodney Crowell the musician does not make a good book.

However, Rodney Crowell growing up in a tiny postwar house in a hard-drinking

hillbilly family does make a page-turner. This was the '50s that millions of working-class Americans faced, not the comfortable version portrayed on *Leave It To Beaver*.

Some of the scenes of Crowell's childhood are downright horrifying, yet laced with black humour. Take Crowell's 10th birthday, when his parents, J.W. and Cauzette, take him out to a drive-in restaurant. Unfortunately it's payday, his dad is loaded and his parents get into a raging fight in the front seat. Convinced that at least one of his parents is going to die, young Rodney ends the fight by whacking himself over the head with a Coke bottle, rendering himself nearly unconscious, while Jimmy Reed's *Peepin' and Hiding* plays repeatedly in the background.

Yet his dad always cared, and probably sowed Rodney's love of country music. He was a musician himself, although not a successful one, and brought Rodney to many concerts. Rodney watched Hank Williams from his dad's shoulders when he was two. And in the end his father found something bigger than his ego, joining a church and becoming the musical leader.

"I knew I could write about how fucked up it was, but they rectified it themselves, so it was not self-serving. It served the story of their redemption, coming to terms with acceptance in their own lives. I don't think I would have written about my father beating my mother up if I wasn't able to take the reader to the man that he became. That's the real story—redemption."

When asked whether his dad had mixed feelings about Rodney's success because he was a failed musician, Crowell says he never thought of it until an editor pointed out that he had the career his father wanted. "It's funny: I never had that conscious thought in all those years until I nearly had the manuscript finished."

J.W. met Johnny Cash a number of times and the two got on well. "Of course my dad was somewhat in awe as you can imagine, but he would play guitar and sing with Johnny Cash. Then he would float out of there and float home and tell everybody in Texas."

While coming from a rough-and-tumble background isn't a precondition for good literature it worked for Crowell, not just in his memoir but in his songs. Many of the

characters in his songs are inspired by the people in his neighbourhood, where a lot of men went to prison.

The book was actually 10 years in the making, and for seven of those years Crowell was trying to learn the new craft.

"The seed came from introducing my mother to Roy Acuff. My parents met at a Roy Acuff concert and (decades later) when I introduced my mother to Roy Acuff, and I said, 'Wow there's an arc. There's a story here'."

The project became real after Crowell was exposed to the writer Mary Karr. A friend gave him a copy of *The Liars' Club*, which showed him what good writing is. And it turns out they had backgrounds that were amazingly similar. They were "kindred souls" from the same swampy area of Texas, they both had ridden their bikes through the mist of DDT-spraying mosquito trucks, had alcohol in the family and a parent who was a frustrated artist (her mother was a painter).

Crowell even mentioned her name in the song *Earth Bound*, and they finally met 10 years ago in New York. Karr gave Crowell encouragement, and she did some rather savage editing on the first 30 pages that set him down the right road and taught him the painful process of revision.

In the meantime, Crowell was so moved by the power of Karr's poetry and prose that he convinced her to co-write a record with him. She had no experience with songs or music, although Crowell says she's a natural musician. She learned fast, and was soon writing melodies. She doesn't sing on the disc: the necessary female voices to handle the female narratives are handled by the top female country voices. "I started asking my friends and it snowballed from there," Crowell says. "It's a real family effort."



In a recent interview on National Public Radio, Karr explains that they grew up around the same kind of east Texas poetry. Her father would say things like, "She's got a butt like two bulldogs in a bag."

She had been around a lot of musicians but never saw herself as one. "I had no intention of becoming a songwriter. I was like a cat with my claws around the doorframe, but Rodney was pushing from behind saying, 'You can do this'."

And she did do it, starting with the zinger of a line, "If the law don't want you, neither do I." After hiring a vocal coach in New York, Karr has learned how to sing well enough to play 15 dates with Crowell.

Crowell will be playing a lot of dates with Emmylou Harris next year after releasing their album of duets. There'll be a couple of Crowell tunes on the album but it's mostly songs they've wanted to sing together for a long time, songs by the likes of Roger Miller and Kristofferson. "If you like that southern California marijuana country, this is it," he jokes.

In a way the album with Emmylou neatly wraps the parcel of Crowell as songwriter and as memoirist. As he wrote in *Chinaberry Sidewalks*, one of his father's last utterances on his deathbed was about Emmylou. But on second thought, that's probably not that unusual among North American men.

## Piece Work

**Maria Dunn remains one of the few songwriters in Canada to document the lives of ordinary working people. Piece By Piece, her profoundly moving latest recording, provides a social insight into a historical Alberta garment factory. By Tim Readman.**

“**M**y first foray into Edmonton’s labour history was 10 years ago when I did a residency with the Edmonton District Labour Council and my CD, *We Were Good People*, came out of that.”

Listen up good people because those words come from Maria Dunn, one of a dying breed in the contemporary Canadian folk roots music scene—the folksinger who cares and sings about the lives of ordinary working people.

Her latest CD release, *Piece by Piece*, is the musical part of a “video ballad”; a 60-minute multimedia depiction of the experiences of immigrant women who worked in Edmonton’s GWG clothing factory throughout its 93-year history.

“For *We Were Good People* I developed a multimedia show with labour historian Don



Rodney Crowell

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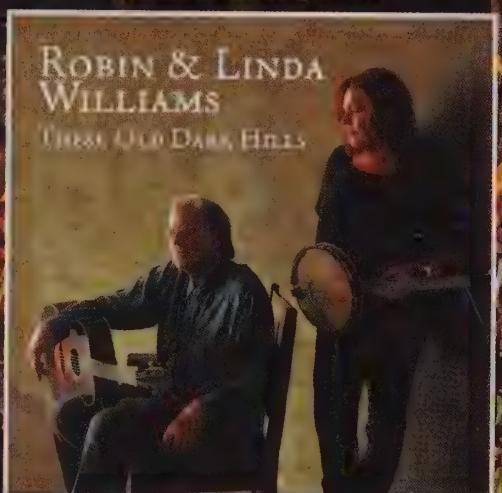
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Bouzek and toured it. He then approached me about an idea of doing a history of a clothing factory which had been around for years in Edmonton. I was interested because there's lots of work been done on the history of women in farming communities but not too many people had looked at women working in an urban setting in Alberta, and how it influenced immigration to that area. Their stories had not been told so far. What attracted many immigrant women to GWG was that it did not require a strong knowledge of English, so they were often new immigrants or refugees. There were Italians in the 1930s; Hungarians after 1956; Czechoslovakians in the '60s; Chinese in the '60s after Canada lifted the ban on immigration; Vietnamese in the late '70s; and in the '70s and '80s people from India and Pakistan, as well as daughters of early farm workers from Ukraine who moved into the city. So their stories reflected waves of immigration and it was a fascinating way of looking at different aspects of their lives."

There are some deeply moving stories behind the songs on *Piece by Piece. I Cannot Tell You* was inspired by a Vietnamese woman who saved and saved to buy medications to send home for her sick grandmother but before she could send home what she had stored up, her grandmother died.

"It is also about the loneliness of being a new immigrant or a refugee. They set off to find a new and better life but had the overwhelming experience of loneliness."

*Speed Up* is musically inspired by the waulking songs of the Hebrides, with its refrain where everyone joins in. "It's about keeping up with the pace. So many of the operations in a factory are timed. The faster you work, the more money you make. These women were desperately trying to establish themselves. They were working weekends on other jobs. They would work days and their husbands would work nights. They spent huge energy to bring other family members here and to make the best of life here for their children. They had to keep up. It is important to remind ourselves how hard newcomers are working. We don't always realize it."

*Blue Lung* is about a Ukrainian woman who has sadly now passed away. Her lung disease was tied to her years at GWG.



"There was little awareness of health and safety and nothing was available to stop her from breathing in the dust from the denim."

"All the women interviewed told the stories of their real lives in a poetic way, no matter how seemingly ordinary their lives might be. For a songwriter that's a gold mine. It was a privilege to take their stories and write those songs. *Farewell* tells the story of the last party that the women had together. Their Indian supervisor sang for them. There was a great feeling as a community. The respect they had for one another was obvious. They helped and supported one another. Some still keep in touch. They are really beautiful women who worked so hard for their children's dreams. Now with globalization the companies are moving manufacturing to somewhere else where the workers will be paid less. When a factory closes in Canada, rather than these international corporations, who should know better, starting the new one with a living wage and benefits, they are not doing that. It makes me angry that companies who have made a huge profit don't at least start with the minimum in other countries."

It is important to point out at this juncture that *Piece by Piece* is not only a great piece of social history, it is also full of wonderful music and singing. Instruments and musical styles are employed in a way that unerringly gets the story across. You'll hear musical references from India, Ukraine, Italy, Vietnam and beyond. Shannon Johnson's production is stellar, as usual, and the result is a record full of excellent songs that sounds beautiful.

"For me it was a bit of a stretch from my

usual way of setting songs. We pay musical respect to where women came from and also work that into the live show."

It's a project that Maria clearly loves and has put her heart and soul into. "I've definitely found a niche here working with labour and social justice groups who invite me to do projects. That's why I fell in love with folk music, because of hearing people like Roy Bailey and Dick Gaughan—and the things I learned about justice from their songs. I also love trad music and a lot of that runs through my songs. I love Karan Casey and John Doyle, June Tabor and Maddy Prior. They really moved me and made me somehow want to be part of it. A lot of today's music that's called folk music, I see it more as acoustic pop music."

There's still plenty to write about, too. Right now in Alberta there's a move afoot for privatization of elder care. Meanwhile the workers are trying to unionize for decent pay and benefits. "It's about not letting everything that's been fought for and won slip away, not forgetting how many people marched and took part in strikes for better, safer conditions and the right to unionize. We need to all realize just how hard it was to get where we are now."

"I'm very conscious that this is a really lovely relationship to have with the community—and it certainly beats writing songs about my own life! If more people want to do it they should just phone me and I'll give them some ideas!"

I for one hope there are more folksingers out there who take her up on her offer. Meanwhile, a very good start would be to enjoy the wonderful music on *Piece by Piece*, sing along and learn from its stories.

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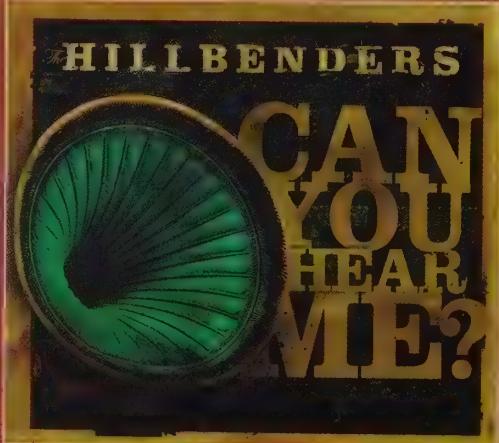
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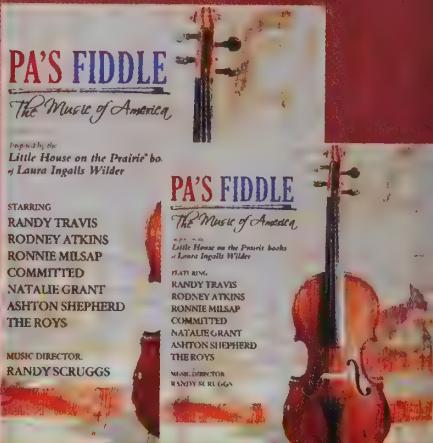


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The Teetotallers

## From Clare To Here

**The Teetotallers consist of three of Ireland's premier traditional acoustic musicians. They predominantly perform rare and unusual tunes from the west of Ireland. Tony Montague pays due diligence.**

**D**uende is a Spanish word for the timeless spirit that possesses a performer in a moment of supreme inspiration. When new Irish trio The Teetotalers played at the Mission Folk Music Festival on a sullen July evening, the Gaelic duende flowed like quicksilver between the musicians and enveloped their fans.

The Teetotalers are a new folk supergroup. Guitarist and singer John Doyle, flute and whistle player Kevin Crawford, and fiddler Martin Hayes enjoy such command of their instruments that they're able to go way beyond technical prowess to focus on infusing the music with soul and character. The tunes are all traditional, mainly from County Clare, but the interpretation is thrillingly fresh and imaginative.

At the climax of a set of reels initiated by Hayes, he and Doyle seemed to be locked

together in a unit of increasing intensity and invention, leaning in towards each other, heads bobbing, energy crackling as they went deeper and deeper, teasing out music's rhythmic, melodic and harmonic essence.

The trio's genesis was a mix of happenstance and manifest destiny. Hayes, Doyle and Crawford first played together a few years ago at the Sebastopol Celtic Festival in California where each was performing with his regular musical partners—Hayes with Chicago guitarist Dennis Cahill, Doyle with Chicago fiddler Liz Carroll, and Crawford as a member of premier Irish instrumental band Lúnasa.

"The director likes to do this thing on the Sunday where he puts musicians' names in a hat and comes up with new combinations," Crawford explains, ironically from the beer garden, a few hours before the evening set at Mission. "You don't have time to prepare a program as such, you've got maybe half an hour to see what you can come up with. We thought our set would be a bit of a disaster because we hadn't had time to work things out, but the audience absolutely went crazy for it. We came off-

stage and said, 'We should try to develop this more'."

The musicians kept talking about the prospect over the phone, and discussed potential tunes via emails. Earlier this year they decided to make a go of it, and put together a tour in Ireland. "We spent a week before that rehearsing and coming up with material that suits our respective styles," says Crawford. "We were able to forge a sound that was our own. It went really well, and we did another two-week tour in the U.S. in the late spring."

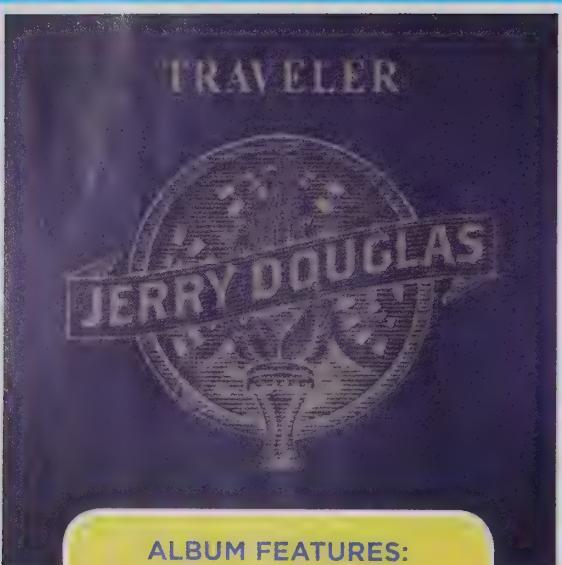
"We're very much an acoustic band," Hayes chips in. "And in Ireland we were playing totally acoustic—with even a P.A. system on a number of occasions."

All three musicians are steeped in the Irish tradition, never losing touch with the core while pushing the envelope. "As a guitarist, John is fantastic at coming at a tune from various angles," says Crawford. "He's not a one-dimensional accompanist. He can make the music really come alive with very different stylistic approaches each time. I think he's the key ingredient in a lot of ways to making this Teetotalers thing accessible for a lot of people."

Hayes is best known for his creative pacing of long sets of tunes and disciplined abandon; Doyle for his restlessly shifting harmonic and melodic attack and fine song

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"The three of us are very in-the-moment players in terms of live performance. It's very important for audiences to know that you're not just going through the motions. We really fight to make every gig a success, and the sparks are flying."

writing in the traditional idiom; Crawford for the sweetness, fluency, and precision of his playing. "You have three individuals who stylistically have gone in fairly diverse directions over most of their careers," says Hayes. "We all have very distinctive musical fingerprints."

As The Teetotalers, the three take particular delight in improvisation. Their attitude prompts comparisons with jazz musicians, though Doyle is quick to differentiate the natures of jazz and folk improvisation.

"In jazz you have a start and an end, and you improvise from there—it tends to be much farther out—whereas Irish music is a continuous form, and you elaborate in between the notes, if you know what I mean."

"There are certain structures to the melody of Irish music," adds Hayes. "If you go too far in terms of improvisation you lose the melodic structure."

Neither Crawford nor Hayes has worked regularly before with a singer. "That's been the learning curve," Crawford reflects. "It's quite a revelation, to be honest, to understand the working of songs. The tunes we play are all very rare and unusual versions, primarily associated with County Clare. I came with probably 90 per cent of the melodies because that's my passion. I'm a complete nerd, if you like, when it comes to them. I trawl through archives and old recordings. That's my life."

In the trio the musicians feel able to interpret the tunes with a new freedom. "I like being onstage with people who I know are going to make the gig go, irrespective of what I do," says Hayes. "I'm in a situation playing with Dennis where the fiddle is very much exposed, and I've got to be 'on' all the time. I'm 'on' with The Teetotalers as well, but with a great degree less of pressure. It feels very comfortable—that's the thing for me."

For all the inventiveness of The Teetotalers, the music they make is, on another level, very basic. "It's an incredibly traditional Irish thing, really," says Hayes.

"Simple, Irish music—fiddle, flute, guitar," adds Doyle succinctly. "It couldn't be more straight forward: sets of two tunes, played three times together."

This fall The Teetotalers enter the studio to make their first album, with more touring to follow next year. The musical friends take very evident delight in creating sparks together onstage.

"The three of us are very in-the-moment players in terms of live performance," says Crawford. "It's very important for audiences to know that you're not just going through the motions. We really fight to make every gig a success, and the sparks are flying. Playing in The Teetotalers with Martin and John, I'm living the dream. It's all you could ever have hoped for in a musician's palette, like. I'm having a ball."

# O'Sister ...

**Taking up the clawhammer banjo gave Linda McRae a new lease on life. The former Spirit of the West stalwart just released the album of her career. It all began with a Coen Brothers movie. Mike Sadava supplies the superlatives.**

**O**n the last song of her new disc, Linda McRae clearly expresses her philosophy of life: "You won't be thrown in the baker when you meet your maker if you be your own light."

After 25 years in the music business Linda McRae has found her own light and, more specifically, her own voice.

McRae has come up with a gem of an album, *Rough Edges and Ragged Hearts*, that is as close as you get these days to pure and genuine folk. Many consider this her best work, which, considering the length and breadth of her career, is saying a lot.

She was best known as the bass player and accordionist with the ridiculously successful Celtic rockers Spirit of the West, and followed that as a fixture in Vancouver's alt-country scene, touring with Rodney DeCroo and the Killers and recording with the likes of Neko Case.

What a long strange trip it's been, but McRae, a grandmother of two, has never felt better about herself or her music.

"I think I'm finally bringing that (her own voice) out," she says following a late night at Vancouver's Rogue Folk Club where she released her new disc. "I feel like I'm comfortable in what I'm doing."

Comfortable does not mean complacent. In fact McRae could be the role model for life-long learning. While she gets instrumental and vocal backing from the likes of Gurf Morlix, Ray Bonneville and The Sojourners, this disc is largely centred around her clawhammer banjo, an instrument she only started playing in the past few years. Strange as it may seem, she had never listened to old-time or bluegrass music until she saw *O' Brother, Where Art Thou*, which opened her ears to the Stanley Brothers and then Hazel Dickens, Alice Gerard, Charlie Poole and the list goes on.

She has attacked the banjo full tilt, attend-



Linda McRae

ing camps and taking classes from the likes of clawhammer ace Brad Leftwich. "I'm so glad I discovered the banjo, especially for a solo singer/songwriter. My music has been redefined because of that instrument—it's what has taken me out of alt-country to folk and into old-time.... It's fun just to learn new stuff. When I'm coming up with a new exercise on guitar or banjo, that's when I find the songs coming out."

For many years McRae was more of a multi-instrumentalist, especially on accordion and bass, rather than a songwriter.

"I tried to write with Spirit of the West, but it never worked. It wasn't me. It was like being a Nashville writer writing for someone else."

*Rough Edges* is McRae's fourth solo album, and she credits her American husband, co-writer and manager James Whitmire, for much of the leap in the quality of songwriting.

The couple met online, she says with a bit of a laugh, noting that she met a lot of people though the music business, but none who sparked any romantic interest. They hit it off immediately after meeting, married in 2007 and settled in Nashville, in part to put her near the source of the Appalachian music she was studying.

Whitmire as not a musician but made his living raising large donkeys (16 hands

high) called American mammoth jackstock. While he's new to songwriting, Whitmire took to it right away. "Some of the stuff we've written together is the best I've ever written."

Although she's on the road more than she is at home, McRae has thoroughly enjoyed living in Nashville. There's far more to the city than the commercial country hit factory, she says. As the Lovin' Spoonful sang nearly 50 years ago, there's 1,352 guitar pickers in Nashville, and her new home has put her in touch with some great songwriters, including David Olney and Mike Farris.

Being in Nashville has also encouraged her to get out more and perform, and for the first time in her long career she is doing it mainly as a solo act. She downsized originally for financial reasons: after all, it's hard to make money touring with a band these days.

But she has started and is thoroughly enjoying life as a solo act. Being part of Spirit of the West or an alt-country band, she never had to talk much onstage. But a Home Routes tour, which brought her into intimate contact with audiences in people's homes, made her realize that telling stories is part of the job of a folksinger, and she has surprised herself by becoming quite the storyteller.

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voice, as well as her instrumental versatility, others want her to sing with them.

A cobbled-together, old-time trio called Daughters of Blood and Bone, with McRae, Melissa Devost and metropolitan Horsefly's own Pharis Romero, was a huge hit at ArtsWells this summer.

"I never before sang three-part harmony with women and the blend we had was pretty amazing.... We're going to have a little powwow to see where we can take it. We were pretty shocked."

McRae also hopes to be back in prison—not as an inmate but as a performer and teaching songwriting workshops. McRae and Whitmire were recently doing just that at New Folsom Prison in California through the Arts in Corrections program, and the inmates could really connect with Whitmire, who had been an addict 25 years ago. While a lot of these people deserve to be locked up, many are there because of wrong turns and mistakes, she says. They hope to go back to New Folsom and have arranged a couple of prison workshops in Canada, as well as some work with at-risk youth.

It's part of their desire to give back. A dollar from each disc sold is going to the Canadian Shriners Children's Hospital, in part because Whitmire was an outpatient at a children's orthopedic hospital when he was a youngster.

Grateful for being able to earn her living through music, she also has a desire to help younger people seeking to travel the musical road. A lot of young musicians give her discs, and often it's apparent they're trying to sound like Ani DiFranco or some other popular artist.

"Everybody is unique and when people try to sound like somebody else they're doing themselves a disservice. They should find their own voice."



Gordie Tentrees

## North Star

**Gordie Tentrees travels the world singing and talking about Yukon. And his latest release, North Country Heart, pays tribute to one of the most beautiful but isolated areas in Canada. Tom Murray lends an ear.**

**G**ordie Tentrees might have a north country heart but he's only just getting around to publicly revealing it for the world to see.

The Yukon-based singer/songwriter has never been shy of his fealty to the north, so it really shouldn't be surprising that he eventually declare it front and centre on an album. *North Country Heart*, his fourth full release and newest since 2010's Western Canadian Music Award-nominated *Mercy Or Sin*, is a 12-song homage to home and hearth, a collection of stories that resonate with the landscape of his adopted abode.

"I'm always talking about it onstage," admits Tentrees, who has lived in the Yukon Territory for somewhere close to 14 years now. "There are always jokes about things like how you have to wrestle bears to start

the van, things like that. I thought I should write about this stuff, and once I got the ball rolling it all just poured out."

It took some time for this to happen. Tentrees has never been one to start with a concept when writing but a few things fell into place that helped him decide to explore the possibilities. One was Kim Barlow's album *Lucky Burden*, which looks closely at the lives of the 14 residents of Keno City, a small mining town in Yukon. Tentrees considers Barlow's record to be one of his favourites from start to finish, and an inspiration for *North Country Heart*, though the two are very different both sonically and lyrically.

Tentrees is also candid about where he believes himself to be at as a songwriter. A late-in-life musician, he's learned by going out on the road for extended periods, surrounding himself with talented sidemen, and taking advice from his peers. He thinks of *North Country Heart* as being his actual debut album, the first release of his of which he's unqualifiedly proud.

"You know, I grew up around writers like my mom and grandma, who have actual published works," he reflects. "There are actors and athletes in the family, they've al-



Linda McRae

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To Tentrees



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- Mike Ross, *Edmonton Sun*



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ways been around me, but I had to learn my craft as an adult, which is not fun. It took a long time for me to really learn to play my instrument, and to learn how to write. It's all been smoke and mirrors; I'm really glad that people have put up with me for so long," he jokes. "But really, I've always had the gumption to do it, and I've always fortunately known when to shut up and listen."

Tentrees has always been the type to just jump in, and over the years he's listened closely to a lot of talented friends when they've advised him on a lyric or a musical phrase. He points to people like Roger Marin, a singer/songwriter himself and occasional pedal steel player for Fred Eaglesmith, as a help in the process of growing as an artist. Marin is also a part of the Tentrees touring band, along with drummer Pat Phillips and bassist Aiden Tentrees, a road-tested crew that the singer has taken on the road for five months.

"This is a workingman's tour; the guys have all done this before, and have no issues with it. They know it's a marathon, that we'll be going to war, not just being weekend warriors. We're drinking water and eating vitamins, and doing pretty good both physically and mentally. I'm really proud of this band; they give it their all whether there are five people in the audience or five hundred. We've been playing a lot of small towns, taking as many gigs as we can, just so we can stay afloat, and everyone has brought something to the table."

This is necessary since the amount of time Tentrees has to take just getting down south from his home in Whitehorse is substantial, somewhere in the area of 20 to 24 hours one way. When he gets into more populous areas, he has to play as much as possible to not only make sure his band is taken care of but also to justify the long drive. For the *North Country Heart* tour he's all over Canada, with stops in the U.S., U.K. and Europe as well.

"It's really good for me overseas," Tentrees says, "but they all react to my music very differently. It's a weird thing; I have to adjust depending on where I am in Europe, like some places want slide guitar and harmonica, other places want something else. There are countries where I just play and keep my mouth shut, because nobody really knows English, but in the U.K. and Germany I end up talking more, because they want to hear stories, and they like the Canadian accent."

They also have no idea of the size of the country, not realizing that Tentrees lives a long way from the more recognizable Canadian cities. For some Europeans, Whitehorse exists in the same relative area as Halifax, just another mysterious city in a mysterious country. In a sense, we can look on *North Country Heart* as Tentrees' tutorial on the land he's grown to love, a way for him to let others know about one of Canada's best-kept secrets.

"Yeah," he chuckles. "It's like when I go down deep South, people don't really know what I'm talking about. I'll try and explain where the Yukon is, but they really don't get it, even when I say that it's next to Alaska. I guess I'm really representing the whole country when I'm over there!"

# Smart Songs

**Keri Latimer's Japanese-Canadian grandmother endured internment during the Second World War. And she inspired the lyrical content on Keri's delightful solo album *Crowsfeet* and *Greyskull*. Pat Langston details the exquisite results.**

E.E. Cummings would doubtless be surprised to learn one of his poems has been co-opted by Winnipeg-based singer/songwriter Keri Latimer to help counter the tyrannical forces that make western women feel they have to be skinny as rails.

Then again, the late American poet, who deplored the subjugation of individuality (and didn't actually spell his name in lowercase), likely would have just said, "What the hell—go for it".

One way or the other, Latimer has blended Cummings's poem *spring omnipotent goddess Thou* with her own lyrics in *Mud and Slobber*, the second track on her delightfully smart album *Crowsfeet and Greyskull*.

"It's one of my favourite poems of his; it's so luscious," she says. "It's viscous and earthy. There's so much in our culture for women to be thin and perfect, and his poetry is so much about being big and human and slobbery. I just thought, 'This would make a really good song'."

"When I see his poem, I have this movie in my head of different layers of life happening in the earth and above it. When I was recording the song I wanted to capture that with some layers of lush music and some sparse sections."

It's a statement that suggests not just a visual imagination—Latimer studied design and visual communication at the Alberta School of Art in Calgary before deciding the profession was too intense for her—but an agile one that links disparate ideas and images with ease. If you know her work as singer/writer with the alt-country band Nathan, winners of two Canadian Folk Music Awards, a Juno and more, you already know this. And it's no surprise to learn that she's a fan of American singer/songwriter Richard Buckner who, like her, spotlights



Keri Latimer

imagery and tone in his songs rather than conventional narrative.

"I try not to over-think my songs," she says. "You just let them come from the tangles in your brain. Sometimes I figure out what they mean a couple of years later."

That wariness of overanalyzing may help explain the unencumbered freshness that defines much of what she does.

It also helps explain her fascination with writing music for films. She wrote music for the 2008 indie flick *Frozen River*, a winner at the Sundance Film Festival and a double Oscar nominee, and has more in the works. She says that because scores play a supporting role in film they must be abstract if they're to avoid drawing attention away from the visual elements and dialogue. She loves the artistic battle that engenders, the conflict between creating music that's meaningful and interesting but not so much so that it overwhelms the film.

Still, Latimer is at heart a musical storyteller, one with a flair for capturing diverse personalities in the voices of those who people her songs.

She credits her Japanese grandmother, Saito, for showing her the mysteries that lie just below the surface of everyone's life. A storyteller herself, Saito endured the internment of Japanese-Canadians during the Second World War. Latimer was shocked when, in high school, she learned about her

grandmother's experience.

"For her, it was a time in her life that she moved on from. It wasn't a hidden thing or taboo but she moved on. My grandma inspired my love of storytelling and mystery."

*Persuader*, a guitar-rich tune from her album, blends the two in an exquisitely unnerving dialogue between a poor person and an unidentified but shrewdly persuasive salesperson.

For every objection to spending more money, the customer is overcome by the seller's come-ons: "Just one more installment and peace you shall find," promises the faceless vendor.

We never discover what's for sale or much of anything about either party but the song leaves a lasting mark on the listener.

"I was thinking of Sara Carter and what if she'd had access to the Internet," says Latimer, referencing the lead singer of the Carter Family whose husband, A.P. Carter, would leave her for extended song-hunting trips. "She's isolated and suddenly has access to the Internet and the danger that's there. I wonder if she could have stayed in the moment."

The song's last line, "*Persuader persuader / I've only this dime / I hid in the larder / for desperate times*," suggests not.

Latimer recorded this and the other songs for *Crowsfeet* and *Greyskull* in her kitchen.

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She also produced the album. "I'm going to make it myself and use what I have," she said to herself at the project's outset. "I wanted the vocals to be relaxed and natural. When I get in the studio, I get picky and rushed."

That kitchen is also the heart of the home that Latimer shares with her husband, Devin Latimer, bassist for Nathan, and their two young children, Hazel and Oscar.

And while she has issues with cultural norms like thin women, Latimer proudly calls herself a housewife.

The term's negative connotation in the post-feminist era is unfortunate, according to her. "It reduces the word and what you do to a dead end and doesn't take into account all the interesting things (that you can do at home). That's why I use the word a lot: I want to change the connotation.

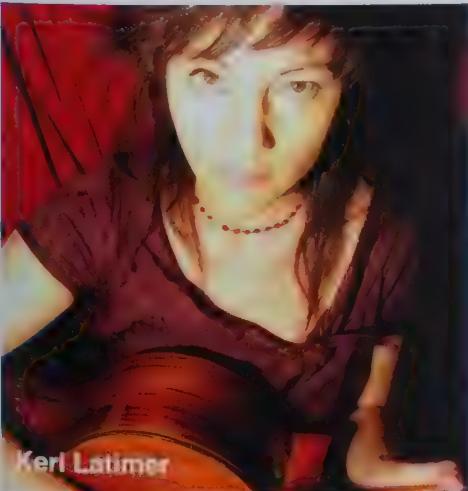
"I've never been terribly ambitious. Working part-time in retail gives me the time at home to write, which is precious."

Retailing shows up a couple of times in the album. There's a reference to a lonely checkout girl in *Persuaders*, and the Beatlesque *Liquidation Sale* tells the story of a store owner forced to sell off everything at bargain basement prices.

"I like a good bargain," she says, "but I find liquidation sales sad. Someone's worked hard to gather all that stuff then they have to sell it."

Like everything on the album, the song rings true in part because you sense Latimer has lived—in some cases imaginatively but always vividly—the story she's relating.

Songwriting, she says, is "like excavating. Or it's like a radio wave: you either tune into it or you don't."



Keri Latimer



Jerry Douglas

## Dobro King

**Long considered the master of the dobro, Jerry Douglas has played on countless recordings for such diverse artists as The Chieftains and Ray Charles. And he has just released a new solo album featuring several riveting, high-profile guests.**

**Doug Swanson pays tribute.**

A good deal of the buzz around the new Jerry Douglas release, *Traveler*, centres around the cover of Paul Simon's *The Boxer*, featuring high-flying roots rockers Mumford & Sons.

"I met them at the Telluride Bluegrass Festival about two years ago, before they really hit," says Douglas. "Craig Ferguson [Telluride AD] keeps his ear to the ground and he spots people like that way in advance. And my daughters told me about them—that's where I get my information."

"They had actually asked for me, too, [at Telluride] for their set. It worked out really good; they knew about me, I knew about them and we clicked. We made a connection and it's been a good one."

In a bit of serendipitous cross-generational pollination, the M&S lads became quite close to Jerry's kids when they stayed at his place in Nashville and a genuine camaraderie has been forged. "They're like sons to me."

Marcus Mumford's distinctive vocals were made for *The Boxer*. And when Douglas played it to his pal Paul, Simon was so impressed he insisted on going into the studio to participate, adding some guitar tracks, Tibetan percussion and some of the soaring, high harmony vocals.

Even Douglas, the undisputed resonator guitar king, doesn't know exactly how many albums he has played on. Estimates range from 1,500 to 2,000 and beyond. (Now there's a research project for a budding musicologist.)

He started playing Dobro, generically a resonator or resophonic guitar, when he was eight, idolizing the pioneering virtuoso Josh Graves. He made his first recording at 16; he's now 56.

Douglas has been awarded 13 Grammys, three musician of the year awards from the Country Music Association and 11 musician of the year awards from the Academy of Country Music, plus many more accolades far too numerous and vaunted to

The image shows the album cover for "NORTH COUNTRY HEART" by Gordie TENTREES. The title is at the top in a pink font, followed by "by" and the artist's name in a large, stylized green font. Below the title is a photograph of a northern lights display over a forest. At the bottom of the cover, it says "GORDIE TENTREES" and "NORTH COUNTRY HEART". To the left, there's a dark area with the text "NEW ALBUM OUT NOW" and "In the rough-cut vein of Fred Eaglesmith or Kelly Joe Phelps, Tentrees is gifted." attributed to "Globe & Mail". On the right, it lists "WORLD TOUR DATES" and the website "www.tentrees.com". A black and white portrait of Gordie Tentrees is at the bottom.

list here.

Douglas spent 15 years as a session player in Nashville; three three-hour shifts a day, five days a week, laying down tracks on other musicians' albums. No wonder there's difficulty nailing down an exact number. On top of that, he has guested on albums by luminaries such as Paul Simon, Elvis Costello, James Taylor, Lyle Lovett, Garth Brooks, Ray Charles, The Chieftains, Phish, Emmylou Harris, Bill Frisell, Earl Scruggs...

Then there's the long association with Alison Krauss and Union Station, J.D. Crowe and the New South, Strength In Numbers, The Country Gentlemen... the shorter list might be who he hasn't played with.

What Jerry Douglas does know is *Traveler*, on the eOne label, is his fourteenth solo release. In a quote from his website, Douglas explains how he wanted to challenge himself on *Traveler*. "Every song on this record was like an adventure. The idea was to take myself out of my comfort zone, and to keep putting myself in unfamiliar situations. I wasn't worried about failing, and I wasn't trying to prove anything. It just felt right to just go for it and try everything."

One of those departures was to forgo the acoustic reso' for a lap steel on seven of the 11 tracks.

"It's a great tool to take out your inner inhibitions. It takes me to just a completely different place. It allows me to play the other music I like to play."

Another tectonic shift was ceding control of the project to another producer, in this case the veteran Russ Titelman.

"When it came down time to do a record that was totally different and take me out of my comfort zone, I decided to turn the reins over to somebody else so they could pull the trigger on things when it was time," he says.

How did that go?

"It was terrible. I did butt in," he deadpans. "It got to the point where when he really disagreed with me he'd just look at me and say, 'No, I don't think so'. If it was something he'd already made his mind up about, he'd give me that look. We've known each other for 20 years so it was great to get the chance to work with him."

Titelman took care of all the details, allowing Douglas to focus on the creative side.

Another deviation from the norm was laying down his lead vocal debut, on Lead Belly's *On A Monday*. He bursts into laughter at the suggestion his next collaboration with Titelman will be *Jerry Douglas the Singer/Songwriter*.

"I don't ever see that happening but it has whet my appetite. You know, I was a singing kid with a mandolin and a guitar, and when I started playing Dobro I quit singing. It's tough to do both; they come from the same centre in your brain, it's trying to do all these things at once, it's multi-tasking off the top of your head. Dobro playing, or violin, something like that—something with pitch—it's tough. It can't work. I wish I could do it. The songs that I do sing onstage now, I just can't play along. There's other people around who can make noise while I'm singing."

When it came time to recruit guest artists it was just a matter of tapping on the buddy list and scheduling sessions.

"I didn't realize most people would want to do that (readily agree to participate). I hate records where it's people calling in favours from their friends just to get a name on a record. I hate those things. That's what put me off doing a record like this for a long time because I didn't want people to think it was just me calling in favours."

On this album—recorded in Nashville, New Orleans, New York and Banbury, U.K.—Douglas is also joined by Eric Clapton, Marc Cohn, Alison Krauss and Union Station, and Keb' Mo'. Guest musicians include Dr. John (piano), Bela Fleck (banjo), Del McCoury (harmony vocals), Sam Bush (harmony vocals and mandolin), Omar Hakim (drums), and Viktor Krauss (bass).

Guest vocalist tracks are sandwiched around instrumental originals.

"Keb' Mo' and I have gotten to know each other over the last five or six years and it wasn't like calling somebody out of the blue. It was really people that I'd said, 'Hey, we should do something, I'd love to play with you whether it's on my record or your record, or somebody's record; however we can do it let's do it'."

# Birdsong

**Magpie Waltz** marks Sarah Jane Scouten's impressive debut release. Inspired by the likes of Stan Rogers and Hank Williams, she considers herself part of a great tradition. Pat Langston nods sagely.

**S**arah Jane Scouten's father, a full-time lawyer and part-time musician, apparently didn't want his daughter venturing forth with any illusions about this business of songwriting. "My dad once said, 'Music's the greatest grand theft of all time,'" recalls Scouten when asked about echoes of other songs in a couple of her own.

He was referring to how songwriters—Dylan springs to mind—have since time immemorial borrowed melodies, phrases and more from existing songs for their own work.

"I totally agree with him now," says Scouten, referring to lines in the old-timey *Twenty Dollar Bill* from her spirited and perceptive country/folk debut CD *Magpie Waltz*. Those lines echo "*my horses ain't hungry / they won't eat your hay*" from *Wagoner's Lad* and other old folk tunes.

"There's quite a few lyrics like that," she says with delight. "I lifted them shamelessly. I'm part of a great tradition."

Don't get the wrong idea. Scouten, a West Coast native in her mid-twenties and now living in Montreal, is very much her own woman musically, and the album hums with personality and strength. At the same time, she is well-schooled in older folk and country traditions and honours them. *My Goddamn Country*, the rollicking opener on her CD, for example, references the late Stan Rogers.

Younger music fans often don't know his name, she says, but just let someone start singing his rowdy *Barrett's Privateers*, and "everyone around the world knows it."

Scouten's also a Peter Yarrow fan. In June, she opened a Montreal-area concert for the former member of Peter, Paul and Mary. She prefaced the gig by watching a YouTube of the trio belting out their hit *If I Had a Hammer*, originally recorded in the early 1960s. "Oh, this rocks!" she remembers saying to herself.



Sarah Jane Scouten

Yarrow, she says, is a sweet and kind of zany man whose legacy includes unrelenting activism. Yet when she joined him in a rendition of *Puff the Magic Dragon*—a song he's probably sung as often as he's tied his shoes—he was pleased as punch to be singing the tune once again.

Still on the subject of old timers, Scouten's also a fan of Hank Williams. In fact, *Twenty Dollar Bill* has the same kind of kicking-up-the-heels cheekiness as Williams's barnburner *Settin' the Woods on Fire*. "Totally!" she says when I suggest the musical echo.

Hardly surprising that traces of Williams show up in Scouten's music. Her father has long been a devotee of the legendary mid-20th century country singer. So much so that he used to play Williams during Sunday family breakfasts.

"I used to not like Hank Williams," she says. "I'd say, 'Dad, don't put this on! Every song's the same, just with different lyrics'."

"I was inundated," she remembers, but eventually came around to Williams's brilliance.

That brilliance was in part rooted in his flair for writing simple but powerful songs, she says. Today, she continues, writers

often eschew simpler music because they fear being viewed as trite and criticized for doing something that's been done before.

Well-done surface simplicity can be an appealing entry point to a song's surprising complexity. *Poverty Wind* on the new album, for instance, spotlights a working-class guy who, buffeted by the lousy economy, turns to smoke and the bottle to dull the reality of his life. Surprisingly, he still struggles out of bed every morning and heads off to a hiring hall where he's usually passed over for a daily labouring job. Something in him, though, won't let him admit defeat despite this daily indignity.

Scouten says when she was writing the song she was worried she would come across as being overly critical of this man and his seeming inability to extricate himself from his situation. "I used to ride down a street where people lined up to get a job and they looked really rough early in the morning," she says. Still, dope and alcohol or not, "you have to be partly together to keep trying to get a job."

Her portrait of him, despite her initial fears, is a textured one.

Joining Scouten on this and other tunes is a tasty lineup of musicians. They include

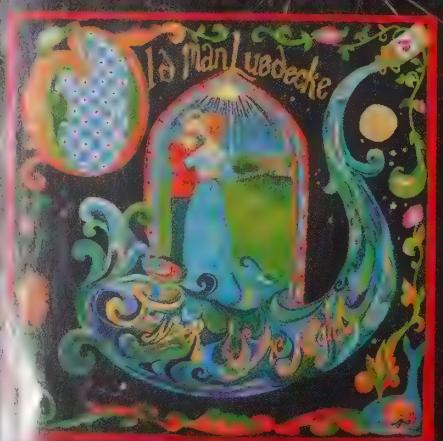
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10.24	NELSON, BC	Royal on Baker
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11.21	MONTREAL, QC	Divan Orange
11.22	TORONTO, ON	Glenn Gould Studio
11.23	LONDON, ON	London Music Club
11.24	KINGSTON, ON	Grad Club
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- 10.20 - SASKATOON, SK  
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her sister, Anna Scouten, handling vocal harmonies on a couple of tracks (Anna is also Sarah's sole band mate during the West Coast tour she's on when we chat by phone).

Other musicians include Luke Fraser playing mandolin on the title track.

"She brought the songs to us as just guitar and voice," says Fraser, who studied classical guitar and has taken up mandolin more recently. "She didn't have any band arrangements so it gave me a chance to learn some new chord voicings and work the mandolin into the arrangement we did."

Sarah Frank, a crackerjack fiddler and harmony vocalist, is also on the album. A classical musician by training, she's Fraser's partner in life and co-band member in Montreal's genre-jumping The Bombadils.

She joined the others to record Scouten's album at Concordia University's Loyola Chapel in Montreal. Recording in the Gothic revival chapel, with its stained glass windows, says Frank, "reminded me of playing classical music in a string quartet because we used to do shows in churches. With this album, the chapel is so resonant that it captures the acoustic instruments really nicely. It was a bit hard to get things set up at first so it was balanced, but in the end it sounded really good."

The whole album sounds really good. Scouten has a flair for tying emotions to arresting images ("Well, I hope you're thinking of me from the back of your daddy's car," she sings in *Bad Weather*).

She creates mood without resorting to theatrics. And she respects musical tradition. Sometimes she borrows from it. Liberally. But she's always her own woman.



Sarah Scouten



Brian Dunn

## Tune In

**Brimming with charm, unexpected twists and pensive experimentation, Brian Dunn's second release, TVs And Radios, has fashioned some well-deserved critical approval. Jason Schneider keeps an ear to the phone.**

**I**t's a Wednesday morning in Sudbury, ON, and Brian Dunn has just started his shift at Cosmic Dave's. It has become, in short order, an oasis of sorts for the northern Ontario music scene, a retail outlet for instruments and vinyl, as well as a recording studio. Although the brainchild of Mark Browning of the band Ox, Dunn has taken on a fair share of responsibility at Cosmic Dave's and trying to conduct a telephone interview on this day turns out to be a bit of a challenge, with a few unexpectedly talkative customers dropping in. But it's precisely the personable charm he shows toward the regulars that shines through on Dunn's latest album, TVs and Radios, leading to a lot of critical praise.

Dunn's second release contains the sort of subject matter one might expect from a singer-songwriter living in a relatively remote location. Long stretches behind the

wheel are the predominant theme, closely matched by outsider impressions of various destinations, late-night motel experiences, and relationships strained by too much time apart. The overall sound echoes the masters of the form—Springsteen, Neil Young, Ryan Adams—and while Dunn rarely strays from the adage of writing about what you know, it doesn't take too much time to hear TVs and Radios as a vivid account of the last couple of years of his life.

"I did write a lot of these songs on the road, mainly to incorporate into the shows right away," Dunn says. "Our live set was just 10 songs initially, so I wanted to fill that out with more original stuff. Those are the upbeat songs on the album, mainly. The slower songs I wrote after we got back from touring. They have a pretty similar feel because they all came out over the span of about four or five days."

By then Dunn already knew what his approach to TVs and Radios would be, having established a relationship with producer Dave MacKinnon of Toronto alt-folkies The FemBots on his debut album, *Examining the Fallout*. MacKinnon had been drawn into the Sudbury scene through FemBots drummer Nathan Lawr, who for many years also worked with Sudbury songstress Kate Maki. MacKinnon ultimately played a big role in building

the studio at Cosmic Dave's, and has since put in lots of hours commuting north up Highway 69 to work on various projects with Dunn and others.

"I felt pretty comfortable working with Dave by the time we started doing this album last summer," Dunn says. "It seemed like we were hitting our stride after producing and engineering a bunch of records for other people. The great thing about Dave is that he's just crazy enough to want to try anything, and he's also able to make that crazy stuff sound really good."

That right amount of sonic embellishment with simple song structures has come to represent the bulk of the music coming out of Cosmic Dave's. Like Wilco's Jeff Tweedy, both Dunn and Mark Browning have never been afraid to throw unexpected pop twists into the mix, and TVs and Radios certainly benefits from such experimentation. Opening track Winnipeg especially sparkles, with a tight arrangement featuring Rhodes piano and some fuzzed out guitar augmenting a hard-boiled depiction of the city.

Another highlight is the track Mexico, born out of a trip to the southwestern desert. "That song was supposed to be on my first album but it just didn't make it on for

whatever reason," Dunn says. "The other thing about [TVs and Radios] is that I had the opportunity to rework a lot of songs that I felt weren't quite finished. Over the course of learning how to really function in a recording studio, I realized how to step back and really look at a song outside of its raw form. That's probably made the biggest difference."

Although there is a constant sense of movement throughout the new album, Dunn admits that there's still a lot of Sudbury imbued in TVs and Radios, and he's not ashamed to acknowledge how much those previously mentioned artists with small town roots have inspired him.

"There is a sense of isolation up here," Dunn says. "It's three-and-a-half hours from Toronto and almost five hours from Ottawa, but most of the time it does feel like the middle of nowhere. I know it would make a lot of people, such as [MacKinnon], go crazy, but I actually enjoy it. I love Toronto, too, but after spending a week there all I want to do is come home and crawl into bed."

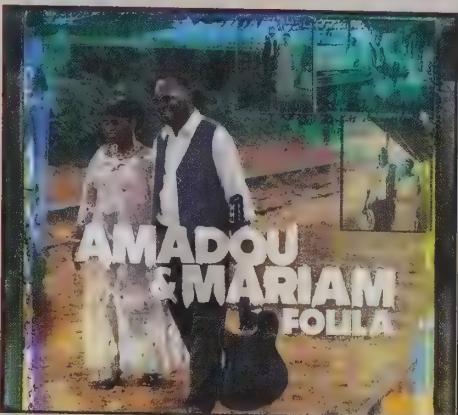
The creation of Cosmic Dave's has given Dunn, and most other musicians in and around Sudbury, reason to take some extra

pride in what they're doing. Much of that can also be attributed to the unwavering passion of Browning who, with Ox, has logged countless tours of North America and Europe over the past decade. Dunn took part in a lot of them, and says that, as Merle Haggard asserted a long time ago, white line fever does indeed exist.

"I've done that east-to-west trip, on Greyhounds, in vans, on trains, at least 10 times in the last eight years, so you get to know places like Winnipeg really well," he explains. "Especially the way I used to do it on the bus, you end up with a lot of free time to contemplate how huge this country is. After about three days your body just starts to feel like crap and you just get used to it no matter how many salads you eat."

"Mark and I started to get what we used to call tour depression after we got home, where we'd wake up in the morning thinking we had to be somewhere, when all we had to do was go to work or mow the lawn. We didn't have to worry about the Econoline starting and driving for six hours. We're trying to avoid that now with shorter trips, and we'll see how that goes when Ox and I do our southern Ontario tour together in October."

## Win Amadou and Mariam's new disc *Folila*



**Q 1:** Name Amadou and Mariam's memoir.

Blind Malian duo Amadou and Mariam first took the world by storm with their collaboration with French global rhythm king, Manu Chao. And they have gone on to tour with the likes of Coldplay, and U2. Pink Floyd's Roger Waters counts himself a fan.

*Folila*, it means *Music*, is their latest release and the very nice people at Warner Bros., Canada

have very kindly provided us with six copies. To win one, answer the following questions correctly and e-mail them to [penguineggs@shaw.ca](mailto:penguineggs@shaw.ca). Put Amadou and Mariam as the subject. And please don't forget to include a mailing address and a proper contact name in order for us to forward your disc. Failure to do so will result in disqualification. Good luck.

**Q 2:** Which Canadian has recorded with Amadou and Mariam?

**Q 3:** Name the international sporting event for which Amadou and Mariam recorded the official anthem?

Answers to the Carolina Chocolate Drops *Leaving Eden*: Q1: Joe Thompson. Q2: Tennessee Chocolate Drops. Q3: The

Chieftains' *Voice of Ages*. And the winners are: Peter Flemming, Dartmouth, NS; Don Albright, Goodfare, AB;

Katherine Birrell, Ottawa, ON; Pat Caley, Edmonton, AB; Valerie McCormack, Fort Erie, ON; Michael Carter, Nelson, BC.

# True Grit

**With their self-titled debut disc, Cape Breton's Sprag Session provide a more wordly approach to their contemporary fiddle tunes. Sandy MacDonald uncovers Celtic funk-rock.**

For a generation of ambitious young Cape Breton musicians, the creative challenge has been how to move the traditional music ahead without losing the integrity and gold-standard lineage of the tunes. Young Celtic players have been raised equally on trad jigs and strathspeys and radio rock, indie-pop and country.

Colin Grant is one of the island's most accomplished young fiddlers, with formal classical violin training as a child before embracing the fiery Cape Breton style at 11 years old. He was soon baptized by fire playing long sets of seamless instrumental tunes for dances in the rural community halls on the barren back roads of the island.

Though he's well regarded as one of the top young fiddlers on the East Coast, Grant is now exploring a new fusion of Cape Breton fiddle music with a high-energy rhythm section. Calling themselves Sprag Session, the quintet is gaining fans around the world for its precise instrumental interplay over infectious rhythms.

Grant describes the sounds as a kind of Celtic fusion that is as much Béla Fleck and the Flecktones and Frank Zappa as it is Ashley MacIsaac. The five virtuoso players include Grant, multi-instrumentalist Darren McMullen, pianist Jason Roach, bassist Donnie Calabrese and drummer Colin (Merlin) Clark.

*Penguin Eggs* caught up with the hard-touring Grant during a layover at the beautiful Skye Theatre in Carthage, ME. The band was working their way back east after a busy weekend at the prestigious Milwaukee Irish Fest.

"We had a pretty action-packed weekend in Milwaukee, playing two gigs a day," says Grant, 27. A week earlier, Sprag Session had played at the rollicking Festival Interceltique de L'Orient in France, that brings together Celtic musicians from all



Sprag Session: Colin Grant sits in the middle

over the world. More than 800,000 fans attend the event over the course of nine days.

Grant and pianist Jason Roach have been performing together since their late teens, playing traditional Cape Breton dances and concerts. Grant was raised in a musical family in Sydney, absorbing the rich canon of Scots-Gaelic tunes that have been preserved by the insular isolation of Cape Breton Island for generations.

"My father is a piper and mom is a Highland dancer so I grew up listening to The Chieftains, The Corries, The Tannahill Weavers, Ashley MacIsaac, Jerry Holland and Natalie MacMaster."

Grant says his classical training may mean he has a little less grit and dirt in his tone, often a point of pride among the Cape Breton players. "But I like to preserve those down and dirty rhythms that are necessary for the dances."

Darren McMullen is a renowned jack of all axes (guitar, mandolin, bass, bouzouki, tenor banjo) who gigs with several Halifax Celtic outfits. He also has side-manned with thundering Cape Breton king of the string J.P. Cormier. Over the past few years, the soft-spoken McMullen has been teaming up with Grant and Roach for trio shows when their schedules meshed.

"When it came time to record my second solo album, I wanted to branch out and try

something new," says Grant. "But I didn't want a contemporary approach for the whole album." So he brought in Calabrese and Clark (from the Tom Fun Orchestra) for two more experimental tracks.

"Donnie and Merlin understand Celtic music but they aren't necessarily Celtic musicians. They're more from the blues and rock genre but they bring this element of call-and-response to the trio of me and Darren and Jason. That really changes the dynamic."

The core of the music is still the interplay between Grant's liquid fiddle playing, McMullen's tenor banjo and mandolin and Roach's inventive piano playing. The sprightly arrangements and impeccable playing certainly draw from the Cape Breton trad roots but manage to find a contemporary vibrancy. Buckle up for an aural journey as these terrific players show the possibilities of the road ahead.

The debut Sprag Session album was recorded earlier this year at Halifax's Solar Audio, with most tunes tracked live off the floor. With five experienced musicians who have all logged thousands of hours onstage, getting a live feel for the CD was second nature. And most of the tunes had been staples of the Sprag Session live shows.

Separated only by some strategically placed baffles and the drummer wedged

into the vocal isolation booth to manage the bleed, the band rolled through each tune two or three times each, and nailed the whole project in six days.

"When we were done we were able to say, 'Yah, that sounds like our band!'"

Grant is understandably resistant to hang a label on the sound but suggests "a Celtic funk-rock" tag.

"I wanted to hear something that tastefully accompanied our original tunes. We didn't really know how to get that at first. But we take a worldly approach—where anything is possible—and I figured the rest would follow."

"It was important to me not to take traditional Cape Breton tunes and reinvent them. That's already been done. For me the trad tunes are most at home in the dance halls and ceilidh gigs that Jason and Darren and I play in Cape Breton—we just put our heads down and shut up and play."

"With this band we can keep our two musical directions separate."

Cape Breton music hit the worldwide

**"We're not trying to devalue the Cape Breton music by composing new tunes but rather preserve the drive that taught us how to play those traditional tunes and take it in some interesting new directions."**

radar in the mid-'90s, with emerging Celtic superstars Ashley MacIsaac, Natalie MacMaster, the Barra MacNeils and the venerable players including Buddy MacMaster, Winston (Scotty) Fitzgerald and Jerry Holland, who long kept the flame burning.

Grant sees the popularity returning for this unique wealth of traditional music.

"It definitely feels like things are coming around again," says Grant. "In the days since Natalie and Ashley, the music has had time to settle back to its trad roots. Now there's a whole string of young fiddle players like Rachel Davis and Chrissy Crowley who have been playing the music as it was intended.

"That returned the music to its roots and has allowed Sprag Session to take the music into a new direction. We never have

to worry about people losing interest in the music in its traditional form. The challenge for Sprag Session is to continue to preserve the traditional drive while tastefully backing it up with a rhythm section that allows the tunes to shine and not be lost."

Wherever the band chooses to stretch the traditional music, its well-anchored roots are set deep in the Cape Breton soil. The musicians are always returning home to play the small dance halls, reeling out long sets of familiar tunes to keep the square sets moving round the sweaty hall. The dancers there aren't particularly interested in musical innovation or funky backbeats.

"Without those gigs to keep us grounded, the inspiration for trying new things with Sprag Session would dissipate. We're not trying to devalue the Cape Breton music by composing new tunes but rather preserve the drive that taught us how to play those traditional tunes and take it in some interesting new directions."

"That's all part of a healthy music balance for us."

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## Stranger in Paradise

**Fabulous Irish flute player Nuala Kennedy's new recording, Noble Stranger, brims with infectious enthusiasm and fearless imagination. Colin Irwin is completely besotted by her lust for life and music.**

“H ave you seen the bus? You’ve got to see the bus...come outside and see the bus!” says Nuala Kennedy, all bright smiles and girlish giggles. So you go outside and there it is, a vintage, battered 1971 VW camper van complete with bright curtains and psychedelic markings. She gestures, stands back and gazes at it lovingly. “Can you imagine travelling around the west of Ireland in this? I’m living the hippie dream!”

It’s hard to resist Nuala’s unremitting enthusiasm and her unequivocal love of life and music. And why would you want to? With her third album *Noble Stranger* mixing her own material with traditional favourites like *My Bonny Labouring Boy*, *Paddy’s Lamentation* and *The Banks Of The Roses*—boldly updated with some fearlessly imaginative arrangements full of rhythmic enterprise—Nuala is

fast becoming one of Ireland’s proudest exports. That she’s also a terrific flute player and vibrant personality only helps you warm to her music, as she gabbles away at a captivating rate of knots, barely pausing for air.

A daughter of Dundalk close to the northern border in the east of Ireland, she’s officially resident in Edinburgh but have-camper-van-will-travel and she’s currently living a nomadic life pursuing the next gig across Ireland, Europe and America. She’s long earned her right to claim her place in the upper echelons of traditional musicians, honing her craft playing and recording with Scots-based bands Harem Scarem, Anam and Fine Friday, an amalgam of flute, fiddle and guitar formed with Anna-Wendy Stevenson, Kris Drever (now firmly ensconced with Lau) out of sessions at Edinburgh’s famous session bar, Sandy Bell’s. “People still ask me about that trio—I like that mix of fiddle, flute and guitar. I have that lineup of instruments when I tour in the States now.”

Her first instrument was whistle, which she took up when she was seven, going on to study classical piano. “I never had to be told to practise. I did competitions, too, and I won

some regional fleadhs, but I hated the stress. I had no stomach for competitions. It wasn’t worth the gold or silver medal.”

When she was 12 her dad volunteered her for a local ceilidh band looking for a flautist. One small problem—she didn’t play flute. Not that this deterred her. “From sheer perseverance I soon got the hang of it and it was the best thing that ever happened to me. That’s how I learned all the basics of traditional music with the ceilidh band. I’d been at it a good year or something and I can remember the day at a ceilidh band practice when I could feel the flute vibrating and I thought, ‘I am really playing this thing!’”

After a foundation year in Belfast, she moved to art college in Edinburgh...but the accidental discovery of a pub music session changed the course of her life. “I had a couple of drinks and said, ‘I can play the whistle’ and someone said, ‘OK, give us a tune then’ and they were very nice and complimentary and bought me drinks and I thought, ‘This is good, I think I might come back here.’”

Art went out the window as she became embroiled in the thriving Edinburgh session scene. “There are a lot of great musicians in Edinburgh. I saw some incredible musicians like the Wrigley sisters and Simon Thoumire and I thought, ‘That’s amazing! I didn’t know traditional music could sound like that.’”

A local piper, Harry Lawson, encouraged



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# Tubthumping

her to concentrate on the flute and, with an unquenchable thirst for discovering tunes, especially from piping albums, added a Scottish repertoire to the Irish music remembered from her ceilidh band days in Dundalk. Cathal McConnell from Boys Of The Lough was another big influence.

"He'd bring me tapes and phone me up at 9 in the morning and say, 'I have this tune I think you may like.' And he'd come round and play with me. I still play with him regularly. We sing some stuff together, too. He's great."

The singing was a constant from her schooldays in a convent, where she'd be prominently involved in school productions of *Oliver* and the like. "I was crazy into music but I never thought it would be possible to make a living at it. There were no traditional music courses in university then and at school music as a subject was so desperate I dropped it when I was 15. I was really into art and massively into ceramics and glass and I really fell into music by accident."

She was a qualified teacher by the time Fine Friday started gigging regularly and decided to put teaching temporarily on hold to concentrate on music. That was 10 years ago and she hasn't looked back since.

She subsequently became deeply immersed in Scottish traditional culture, studying in Inverness and learning Gaelic. "I was living with a fluent speaker from Skye and we were like nerds. I love the songs, the poems, the language, the whole culture...it's beautiful."

She made her first solo album, *The New Shoes*, in 2007 and her solo career was up and running. Canada has played a significant role in her evolution, particularly Cape Breton's Celtic Colours festival. "Celtic Colours has been a big influence on my life. They were the first people who invited me as a solo artist just on my own. I had palpitations. I remembered being in bed thinking, 'Oh jeez! It was very stressful but I enjoyed it. Now I have a lot of friends there."

Second solo album *Tune In* came out in 2010 and she also became involved in some intriguing collaborations, ranging from the composition of a special suite celebrating Scottish industry to Norman Blake of Teenage Fanclub, Will Oldham and the late Canadian fiddler Oliver Schroer, with whom she made the album *Enthralled*.

"Oliver was an incredible improviser, a brilliant musician and a great writer of

amazing music. When I met him I'd been writing tunes a lot longer than songs but we found we had a similar approach and our music was pretty compatible, so I invited him over to Scotland to work on a commission for Celtic Connections.

"He was mad into the music like myself and we'd play like lunatics. We'd play for fun at random opportunities and sneak off for a tune somewhere just for five minutes. We went to this concert in Canada and in the break we went down into the car park and sat in the van and played some tunes. It was obsession beyond belief. We just sparked each other off in a creative way. He was an unbelievably inspiring person [Schroer was diagnosed with leukemia in 2007 and died a year later].

"I spent a lot of time in Toronto playing with him in the hospital. He used to call it 'the hotel'. There were always musicians coming in to play with him between treatments. He was very ill at some points when we recorded that record but he'd get a day pass from the hospital to go to the studio to record tracks. And he wrote these inspiring e-mails to people. He had the philosophy that the glass was half full rather than half empty. I was brought up like that, too, so I could relate to his approach to life and music. We were big buddies."

And now here is Nuala Kennedy with a strong coterie of friends and musicians in various parts of the globe, playing flute as if her life depends on it, singing like a dream, putting new life into the tradition and adding to it with some tasty songs of her own. All this and a VW camper van to roam around in.

"I love it, I just love it," she says for the 95th time in the last half-hour before breaking into wonderfully infectious peels of laughter. "I can't imagine doing anything better..."



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Dan Mangan

## The Heart of Darkness

**A thoughtful man, that Dan Mangan. Not only does he ponder the big, dark themes like death and dying but he also takes album titles from the whimsical poetry of Kurt Vonnegut. Eric Volmer catches up with Mangan in Berlin after a summer of conquering Canada.**

If more proof was needed that inspiration sometimes works in mysterious ways, consider the flash that led Dan Mangan to name his third full-length album *Oh Fortune*.

The title may have given editors across Canada an easy go-to word for headlines, but it was inspired by the Vancouver singer/songwriter's fascination with the

proverbial 15 minutes of fame enjoyed by Gertrude Ederle, an obscure public figure of the 1920s who had long since faded from public memory. For a brief shining period in 1926, Ederle was the most famous person in America, resulting in a festive ticker-tape parade held in her honour in New York City after she became the first female to swim the English Channel.

Mangan found her picture after doing some sort of an image search on Google. As is often the case with Dan Mangan, it got him thinking about things that had seemingly little to do with Gertrude Ederle.

"I had this image in my head of a ticker-tape parade," he said. "I remember I had kind of heard about it maybe in history class when I was in high school. It was just

this idea that you would have Chicago or New York, big economic powerhouse cities filled with stockbrokers, and some kind of event would go on that would inspire people to drop whatever they were doing and focus on this event. You would take a ticker-tape, which brings you information and is your conduit for the market, and take it by the handfuls and literally throw it out the window. It is a beautiful metaphor for letting go for a moment."

On this particular day, the 29-year-old is talking on his cellphone from a van somewhere outside of Berlin, racing towards the next gig in what had already been a triumphant tour of Europe. It followed a successful run through some of the biggest folk festivals in Canada. After winning Junos for best new artist and alternative album in the spring, he had comfortably graduated from side-stage up-and-comer to must-see headliner in the eyes of most folk fest programmers. His performances were well-received. Even his workshops were packed. His tours now stop not only at clubs but big-city theatres: Edmonton's Winspear Centre, Winnipeg's Burton Cummings Theatre, Calgary's Jack Singer Concert Hall.

*Oh Fortune*, released in September 2011, followed 2009's breakthrough *Nice, Nice, Very Nice*. The latter album landed on 2010's Polaris Prize shortlist and cemented Mangan's reputation as a top-notch songsmith with folk roots. On the surface, *Oh Fortune* seemed like that obligatory "difficult" follow-up. Darker, denser and more ambitious when compared to its crowd-pleasing predecessor, it seemed the sort of album made by a artist keen to break free of genre restraints and the easy fan expectations that tend to come with success.

So it's not too much of a stretch to assume Mangan's fascination with Ms. Ederle's fleeting celebrity may have also involved a little navel gazing as he entered the strange world of celebrity himself. Diplomatic and amiable during interviews, the songwriter certainly doesn't reject the idea, offering a half-hearted "well...maybe...yeah" and even admitting the title was partly a tongue-in-cheek comment on our desire for acknowledgement.

But as the conversation continues, it becomes clear that the thought process

sparked by Ederle was deeper and more universal, with reverberations that had Mangan considering everything from the Arab Spring, to 9/11, to how society's shared perceptions of history are formed.

"It's that whole idea of just being caught for a moment," he says. "It happens in life. We have our heads down and we're watching the pavement and not really paying attention to what's around us because we are so involved in what's in our head, and then something goes on. It could be something right in front of you. It could be a guy being hit by a car. It could be something more grand like 9/11 or a royal wedding. But the whole world stops and pays attention. And I thought how our social history is just a collection of collective memories. We all have our own perspective on what happened. But what did happen on the West Bank? What did happen in Egypt during the Arab Spring? So much of what we are is defined by things that we never even participated in..."

It's all heady stuff. But, as it turns out, perhaps not overly relevant when it comes to understanding the album. Most of the songs on *Oh Fortune*, including the one later renamed as the title track, were written before Mangan began pondering the pointed symbolism of Ederle's long-forgotten aquatic triumph. But the artist's long, meticulous thought process when it came to settling on an album title offers a glimpse into his modus operandi. It took Mangan six months to record *Oh Fortune*. While this may not seem all that indulgent when compared to, say, Guns N' Roses' 15-years-in-the-making *Chinese Democracy*, it's a virtual eternity for an indie folk artist.

Songs were written, rewritten and fussed with. Extra musicians were brought in clutching horns, woodwinds and string instruments. Mangan spent the weeks and months between exhaustive cross-continent jaunts to find new ways to match the sounds he had milling about in his head.

"With the previous two records, I just always felt rushed," Mangan says. "The whole thing happened so quickly and intensely. I just always thought we could have tried more things and thrown more at the wall to see what would stick. I always felt like I had more ideas than time."

The resulting album, while not complete-

ly bereft of acoustic singer-songwriter fare, took Mangan's songs into sonic territory that seems quite removed from what would traditionally be considered folk. Check out the slow-burning build that leads to the frenzy of drums and guitar of *Post-War Blues*; the creeping dread found in the strings on opener *About As Helpful As You Can Be, Without Being Any Help At All*; the anthemic guitar crunch that fuels rocker *Row of Houses*; the blast of stately horns in the climax of *Starts With Them, Ends With Us*.

Not unlike Tom Waits, R.E.M. or Joe Henry, Mangan appears to be one of those rare artists whose audience is more than willing to follow him on off-road sonic excursions. In fact, his fan base seems to grow the farther he drifts from traditional singer-songwriter fare.

"It seems a lot of the time a band stumbles upon a sound that people respond to and there's this fear that if they move away from that sound they will leave the audience behind," he says. "It's a legitimate concern. But I always felt if we ever did something popular, it was by mistake. We just stumbled upon it. And the other thing is that I feel like as soon as there is a classifiable term to whatever sound we are making and people start to call it that, I immediately have a desire to make a different sound."

If Mangan maintains any connection to the directness of traditional folk music, he believes it's in his lyrics, which the writer

says remain "insanely important" even as the music strays into more experimental territory.

More Nick Drake than Pete Seeger, Mangan certainly follows the darker impulses of folk music with his words.

Song titles such as *If I Am Dead, Regarding Death and Dying* and *Jeopardy* certainly don't suggest a chipper outlook. But Mangan's obsession with words and "big themes" didn't come out of the blue. After a childhood spent in a musical house filled with instruments and his older siblings' Beatles and Van Morrison records, he studied literature at the University of British Columbia. The title *Nice, Nice, Very Nice* actually comes from a poem found in Kurt Vonnegut's 1963 novel *Cat's Cradle*. Lyrics are anything but utilitarian for Mangan, who says he "edits, whittles and wrangles" until he "feels they are where they are supposed to be".

"I think it's just something I respect," he says. "I find I write more when I'm reading more. My brain works faster. I start to gain more perspective. I just feel more alive when I'm spending time reading. And, as a result, I tend to write more songs."

As for the dark themes, Mangan chuckles when asked if we should be concerned with what at times seems like an unhealthy fixation with death, loss and general misery. He said his fascination with mortality simply arose from the fact that he was entering his mid- to late-20s when writing the songs, which led him to ponder the big questions



Dan Mangan:



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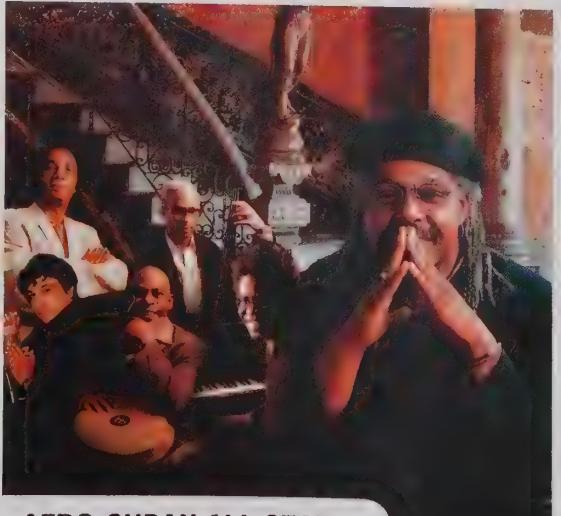
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in life. Besides, thinking about death is not necessarily a grim process, he insists.

"Coming to terms with death and coming to terms with a deadline is a kick in the ass to go and do the things that you actually want to do," he said. "It's true people have talked about this being a dark record. I can see why people would hear that but I don't necessarily agree with that. Just because you talk about something that can be sad doesn't mean it is intrinsically sad. I think talking about sad things can be a healthy thing. I think the record has victory underneath."

All of this suggests that Mangan spends more time than most carefully thinking about things, whether it is lyrics, music, album titles, death, life, mortality, history, literature or ticker-tape parades. But he's unusually vague when asked to speculate on his own popularity.

"There are all sorts of intangible stuff," he says. "When it comes to music, you can never predict what people will like.

We've just stuck to our guns and done what felt right for us. For me, what that's meant is a lot of growth and evolution in what I desire to make musically. I think the simple answer is that we've just been a very hard-working band and we've played between 130 and 200 gigs a year for the past five years in the row."

Not to take anything away from his music, but another theory about Mangan's rise is that he's simply a nice, decent fellow who has attracted more than his share of good karma during his climb from Vancouver street corners and coffee houses to theatres, festivals and Juno Awards. You would be hard-pressed to find an article that doesn't mention how likable and down-to-earth he is: the bearded folkie with deep thoughts, a love of words and a big heart.

It's telling that while it is his name on the marquee and albums, he uses the pronoun "we" rather than "I" when talking about his success. He meets praise with a mix of

gratitude and humility.

"If we receive really nice compliments after the show, I want to look the person in the eye, I want to appreciate their words, I want to hear them and understand how and why they are saying what they are saying and then I want to forget they said it. Because living with an inflated sense of self is not healthy for me or anyone around me."



Dan Mangan

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# David Lindley

## The Penguin Eggs Interview



David Lindley and Wally Ingram

**D**avid Lindley has to be one of the more singular characters and innovators in music.

Any kind of music, because he's touched on so much of it in some way.

He was born in Los Angeles and raised in southern California during an especially fertile era when musicians, audiences and record labels were open to experimentation. Following his initial experience in roots and rock music Lindley went on to co-found the pioneering psychedelic ethno-folk band **Kaleidoscope** in 1966, to develop his chops as a session player and to work with hit-makers like Jackson Browne for more than a decade.

When he finally formed his own solo project, **El Rayo-X** (1981-1990) was truly beyond category, running the gamut from rock and blues to

all sorts of international influences. He still gets requests for that great slide guitar hit **Mercury Blues** from the self-titled debut disc.

Before and since, Lindley has been a much-in-demand session player, working for everyone from **Linda Ronstadt** to **Dolly Parton**, from **Rod Stewart** to **Warren Zevon**, to guesting on **Bruce Springsteen's** latest, **The Promise**. Along the way he's enjoyed in-depth collaborations with the likes of fellow traveller **Ry Cooder** and musicians from around the globe. At 68 he's a multi-instrumentalist cult hero who seems able to decipher almost any string instrument out there, and he brings a healthy sense of humour and curiosity to the occasion. **Roger Levesque** interviewed David Lindley at the recent Edmonton Folk Music Festival in August.

Has music making always been part of your life?

There was always a piano in the house. My uncle Howard Wells was a concert pianist and both my mother and father played. Classical music was very big, Gershwin and Cole Porter. I used to go into the piano and look at the strings, the brass windings on the strings. I would reach inside and do that (he makes a plucking motion).

When I was four I remember on the street in Pasadena there was a hock shop and hanging in the window was a mandolin. I had seen pictures of lutes and I thought, 'It's a child's lute, I want one of those', but it never happened. I had already been messing around with my dad's ukulele, with him supervising because it was a really valuable instrument. I couldn't wait to get my hands on something and learn how to play.

You were already winning traditional music competitions by your late teens.

They were banjo and fiddle contests. They would have them in Topanga Canyon and it became an obsession. I started winning them pretty early, did it for five years and then they made me a judge. I said, 'OK, I'll judge people's musical worth; that's fun'. I did that for a couple of years.

Living in southern California in the 1960s, there must have been so many new musical developments and so much to take in. What do you remember from that time?

I heard a lot of stuff. It was the beginning of the folk-rock thing when they made the transition from folk music to electrified music. David Crosby and Roger McGuinn, and so many people started playing electric guitar. I had really liked James Burton from a long time back when he used to be on the Ricky Nelson show and when he

used to play with Elvis, so I was interested in electric instruments even before that but never went into it. So it was like a licence to kill. I thought, 'I'm doin' that'.

We got a bunch of people together and it was like folk music electrified. An electric fiddle player, a harmonica player, a lot of middle eastern instruments with my friend Solomon Feldhouse who played zaz, bouzouki and oud. It became the Kaleidoscope group and we used to play in San Francisco all the time. We played Balkan music, Turkish music, blues and country and western stuff. Buck Owens was a big influence and everything was school to us. Our bass player, Stuart Brotman, was from the School of Ethnomusicology at UCLA and he also played the Romanian cimbalom. We learned how to play in 7, and 5 and 9/8 time. It just kept going.

**You were introduced to what is now referred to as world music very early on.**

We helped start a lot of that. Kaleidoscope was one of the first bands that took all that stuff from different places. There were a few others that did that, but Kaleidoscope really made use of it. A lot of times when you put certain elements of ethnic music together it's a very bad thing. You have to have a shit detector and get the good combinations, and figure out what goes with what.

**Even before Kaleidoscope you had been in a bunch of bluegrass and rock bands. Was that whole period an apprenticeship for what would come later?**

Yeah, it was. I don't know how many names we had before the record company—Epic Records—came up with Kaleidoscope, because it suggested a multidimensional approach. They didn't really know what to do with us and we did all kinds of stuff. Leonard Cohen came to see us playing with Nico at The Scene in New York City and asked us if we wanted to play on his first album, so we did (on two tracks including *So Long Marianne*). He knew what to do with us.

**You spent several years with British rocker Terry Reid in England and then for most of the 1970s you worked for**

**Jackson Browne. Were those the first extended periods you had with high-profile acts?**

Yeah. When we first started Jackson and I would go out acoustically and play clubs and occasional bigger venues. Then he got the band going and went to play bigger and bigger places and then stadiums. It really worked out well. 30,000 people at one of them. It just looked like a carpet, like a shag carpet that moves.

**I guess that was the time when shag carpet was the in thing.**

(laughing) High-low shag! It was great, really fun. But Kaleidoscope played to some huge audiences and when I played with Terry Reid we played the Isle Of Wight fest and the Atlanta Pop Festival. Got to see Hendrix play and got to meet him.

**To be making music so focused on song form, did that feel as if it was narrowing your music at all?**

No, it's just another part of it. You learn to play solos and to listen. And I knew all about band dynamics back to when I had been in bluegrass bands before. And plugging in was a breeze compared to the mic placement for a bluegrass band. It was all school, and actually it has always been school. You stay in student mode all the time. I'm always learning something. If you get out of that things become difficult.

**Even after all these years, when you look up David Lindley, one of the first things that tends to come up is the band El Rayo-X...**

It does? (look of mock surprise). I'm so glad.

**Did you sense at that time that you wanted to do your own thing?**

Yeah, and I wanted to play reggae. I heard reggae music while I was in England playing with Terry Reid in '69, '70 and '71. Jimmy Cliff, Desmond Dekker, The Wailers were just starting up, and I said, 'I gotta do that stuff'. It was time.

I found a percussionist named George Pierre (Baboo) Bonaparte who was the basis for the band. He was a Rastafarian guy, really a madman, and incredibly good. I wanted two drummers so I got Ian Wallace—I had played with him with Lonnie Mack—so I put Ian and Baboo together and it made this freight train. That was the beginning. The personnel changed and we got this Cuban drummer Alfredo Reyes—he played with Santana—who was one of the greatest drummers ever. When he was with El Rayo-X it was the best. We had Jorge Calderon on bass and a few different guitarists.

**Were you kind of surprised when it took off as well as it did? It was a little out of the mainstream.**

Yeah, but that didn't matter. We were playing what we liked and we were really good. We played reggae and ska, New Orleans music, and pedal to the metal rock'n'roll', all kinds of stuff. It was one of the best dance band/party bands ever.

**Why did it end?**

My ears. Forty years of 110 decibels and I thought, 'Maybe it's time to go a little softer'. You can only go so long doing that. The ear is a delicate instrument and it needs protection.



David Lindley

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**One of your more interesting collaborations was with Ry Cooder. You must have had a natural connection with him?**

Oh, yeah. Ry used to take stuff off of records and learn everything. What I remember most is how we would go to The Ash Grove club in Los Angeles from 1962 on and hear all of the old blues guys. We would sit in the vestibule at the Ash Grove with Mississippi John Hurt and Bukka White and all these players. You could talk to them and learn and show your stuff. You could do that in those days because they would come and play for a couple of weeks. We would be sitting in the front row watching—Taj Mahal, Ry Cooder, David Cohen and me.

**I know over the past 20 years or so you've gone on to collaborations with Hani Nasser and Wally Ingram, among others. You seem to love working with percussionists.**

Yeah, it was a good move. Playing with Hani, I had always wanted to work with someone who knew the Turkish system and he was a rock drummer for a while, too, so he knew how to play other stuff on the djembe. It was really fun.

Playing with Wally Ingram, the original intent was to have it the way they have it in India and throughout the Middle East, with a string instrument and a hand drum. I always thought that was a great idea. I had also seen Ali Farke Toure at the Winnipeg Folk Festival with his electric guitar and a guy with a cala-

bash. It was BIG little music. They created this other thing with two people and it was a real eye-opener.

**Is the element of sonic space the key there?**

Yeah. You can imply things. I'm learning how to do that myself, to imply the bigger thing, and if you play a certain way, people fill that in.

**You're notorious for your large collection of string instruments. Have you ever met a string instrument you haven't been able to play?**

(laughs) There's a bunch of them. The Austrian zither is a killer, the Ukrainian instrument bandura. A lot of instruments are real similar with necks and frets, strings and soundboards...the bouzouki, mandolin, banjo, guitar, Hawaiian guitar. The oud is different because it has no frets. I've always wanted to learn the Chinese bowed fiddle, the huqin.

**In your live concert yesterday you had two Hawaiian guitars, an oud, and a bouzouki. Does your particular touring bag change much?**

It changes a little because airlines don't like it when you fly with all these instruments but it's working out.

**When you're writing tunes how much of that process comes out of improvising?**

It usually comes out of a key phrase or a title that's good. Like *Catfood Sandwiches* opens up an entire

world. Or my song about Excedrin, *Little Green Bottle*: ‘Give me that little green bottle that shakes, shake it like a rattle-snake’—that opened up something like 30 verses. But sometimes you’re sitting with an instrument and you get a certain lick or a chord progression that you really like and you want to make use of it. Then you think, ‘What should this be about? What do I really hate, or like right now?’ No good situations. All bad. Grrrrrh! Sometimes you’re happy, sometimes you’re sad. You sit and wait and it triggers little things in your brain.

**Have you considered approaching the makers of Excedrin to do a promo for them?**

That’s what my wife said. It kind of sends the wrong message—that you’ve got to watch out for it and not abuse it—but they could just use the chorus.

**From watching you, you make it seem as if it’s effortless, or as easy as verbal communication, almost an unconscious thing.**

Sometimes that happens and you have to be very careful of that. You should be very conscious of how you want the song to sound and how you want it to play. Yesterday at a workshop I started one thing so fast, I just wanted to see if I could get through it at that speed. It was unbelievably fast. It was arrogance. You know you have to be a little delusional to be a musician. ‘Yeah, I can do it’ (he mugs a know-it-all), and you fall on your ass.

**You still like to challenge yourself?**

You have to do that. It has to be done, and sometimes an audience can tell you’re doing that and they kind of like to see that. It doesn’t always have to be a perfect, pristine interpretation. Sometimes they like weird things, like when you break a string. I like to start something going and it takes off and happens on its own, and you can kind of sit back and watch it happen and comment on it and direct it. I don’t know how you activate that circuitry but when it’s there it really works.

**The majority of albums that you have put out over the last 20 years have been live albums or what felt like live-off-the-floor albums in the studio. Is there something about working in the studio that bores you, or do concerts bring out the best in you?**

I like to keep recording techniques relatively simple. There’s no one method.

**Was it interesting to work with Jackson Browne again after all those years on the live album in Spain (*Love is Strange: En Vivo Con Tino*, released 2010)?**

That particular group of people was really wonderful. Magical. Touring Europe and Spain with him and then ending up in Barcelona and Seville with a lot of Jackson’s friends, it was an incredible time. Just unbelievable musicians playing a lot of flamenco and a lot of different high-quality stuff.

**You talked earlier about how these exotic musical traditions have been part of your music from way back. Do you have any thoughts about marketing labels like ‘world music’? Does that have any meaning for you?**

No. It has no meaning. That’s all record company stuff. They put you in a bin. (mock accent) What bin we gonna put Lindley into? We don’t have one for him. There’s reggae but there’s Middle Eastern, too?

A lot of that is disappearing because people in the United States and Canada now know Ali Farke Toure and King Sunny Ade and Gypsy Kings and Paco De Lucia. But how do you explain what it is when you hear the Gypsy Kings playing a reggae tune? Wait, that’s ‘world music A, not world music B’. In essence it’s just their music.

**One could argue that you’ve been a real facilitator in bringing attention to others, especially on the Madagascar recordings with Henry Kaiser.**

Well that was really Henry’s thing. I was really interested in going there and playing with all these guys and I heard incredi-

ble stuff but Henry organized that with Shanachie. They even called us at the hotel and said, ‘If you need more money...’. How odd is that? Great record company. But it broke the tradition of labels that had a monopoly over the musicians in Madagascar and paid them crap. We paid them American scale and that was huge for them. They had never made that much in their lives. It was really fun to screw with the system that had kept these guys dirt poor.

**So where is that situation going in the age of the Internet? For example, now it’s not so unusual to come across a musician in middle America who knows something about Middle Eastern music.**

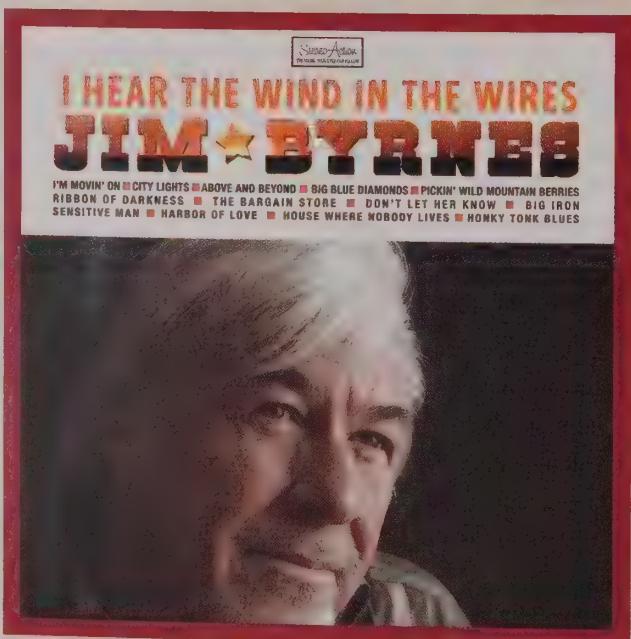
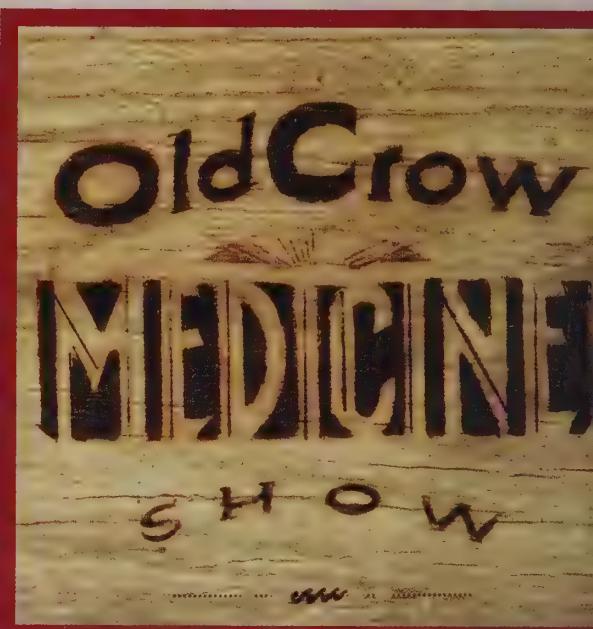
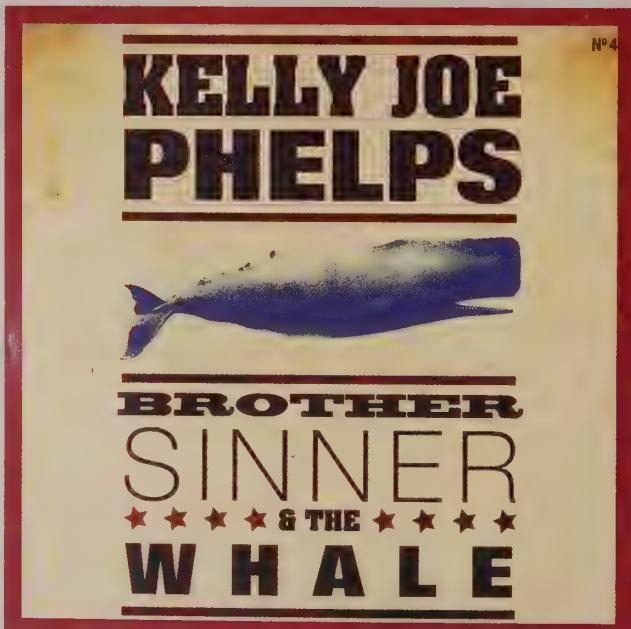
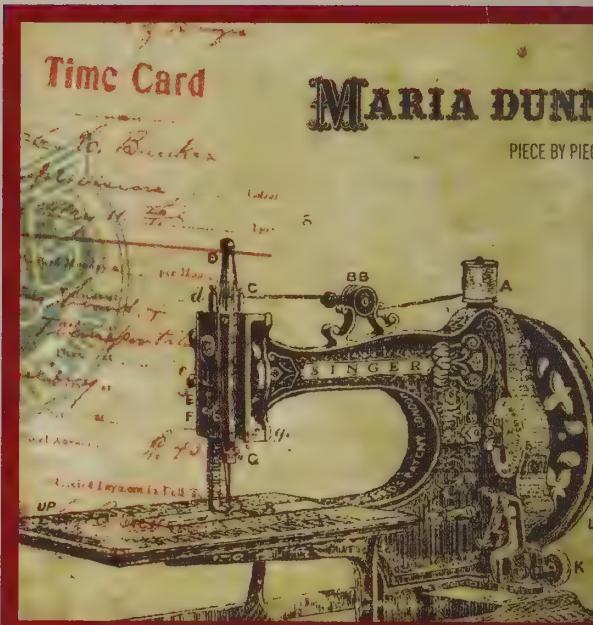
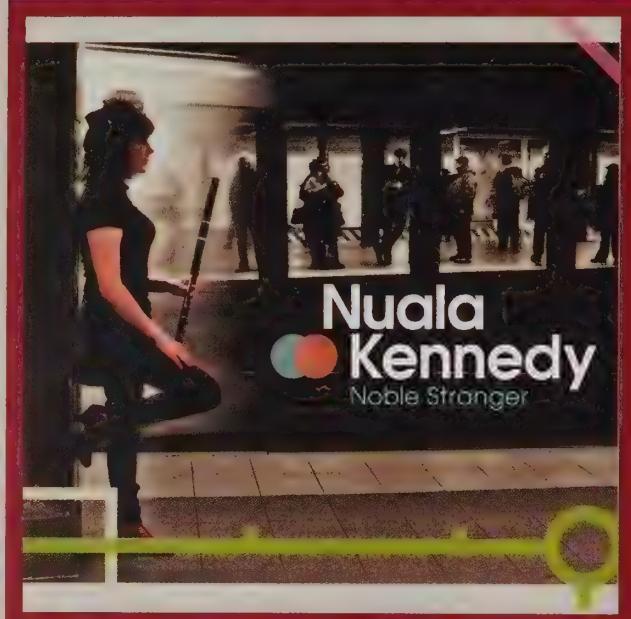
It’s very common and it’s actually really easy to access people in the villages in Turkey who never go anywhere, who play a certain style. Someone will record it and you can see and hear stuff that ordinarily you wouldn’t hear. I used to feel really weird about YouTube-ing everything because it’s for free and these guys are going to make nothing, and there’s still that aspect. But I’ve heard stuff on YouTube that was mind-blowing, stuff you would never hear otherwise.

So technology seems to have made the world a smaller place but it’s also causing the opportunities to expand.



David Lindley

# REVIEW



Sprag Session is staying on my stereo and I am playing it loud. This one blows the roof off, folks!

— Sprag Session, Page 66

Each song is sung and played with skill, humour and gusto with fine talent and craftsmanship throughout, just what you'd expect from a genre rooted in traditional values. — Annie Lou, Page 59



## Iris DeMent

Sing The Delta (Flariella Records/Red Eye)

There aren't many discs you can say are landmark events on first listening but this is one of them. Forget that it's Iris DeMent's first collection of original songs in 16 years. That fact, alone, would qualify it for landmark status but that's not the best part. How about the presence of Al Perkins's slide guitar on the disc?

How many people can say they've played with The Rolling Stones, The Flying Burrito Brothers, Kenny Rogers, Tori Amos, Leonard Cohen, Rita Coolidge, Emmylou Harris and Gram Parsons, Dolly Parton, Dwight Yoakam, and Doc & Merle Watson? How about: only one. That he's playing at the top of his game goes without saying. Then add some utterly classic piano and organ parts to each track by Reese Wynans (Jerry Jeff Walker, Boz Skaggs, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Delbert McClinton).

Are you swooning yet? Add two more guitar monsters as co-producers: Bo Ramsey

(Greg Brown) and Richard Bennett (Mark Knopfler, Rodney Crowell—he's also the guy who co-wrote *Forever In Blue Jeans* with Neil Diamond). Then, as icing on the cake, add the fact that DeMent's voice has never sounded better, stronger, or more soulful and toss in that there's a bunch of great songs such as the title track (*Sing The Delta*), *Living On The Inside*, *Makin' My Way Back Home*, and *The Night I Learned How Not To Pray*. How much more rarified can you get? You can't. This is, as they say, the crème de la crème, peaksville; basically, it's hot shit. Buy it.

— By Barry Hammond

## Annbjørg Lien

Khom Loy (Compass Records)

Annbjørg Lien is a world-renowned Norwegian musician, specializing in the hardanger fiddle and nyckelharpa (keyed fiddle), as well as the conventional violin. She has played with Catriona MacDonald, Natalie MacMaster, Liz Carroll, Mairead Ni Mhaonaigh, The

Chieftains and David Lindley to name but a few. This is her eighth solo release and adds dancefloor, jazz, African, and Asian music to her already extensive palette of sounds. There are a considerable number of musicians and instruments featured here, all tied together by Lien's commanding playing.

The title track, which has a wonderfully melodic Irish sound to it, also showcases her impressive vocals and describes the Eastern ritual of releasing lanterns in remembrance of the dead. *Psalm* is a beautifully executed melodic fiddle piece with vocal underpinning by the Gaashud Male Choir. *Til* features tabla, sarod and fiddle, paying tribute to Indian music and includes a sly reference to George Harrison's *Within You and Without You*. The opening *Tareq* has a groove a mile wide and is somewhat reminiscent of the Afro-Celts at their best with flutes, fiddle and ram's horn blending effortlessly with mellotron and percussion. This is a truly masterful piece of work that makes me want to get better acquainted with Annbjørg Lien's music. Highly recommended.

— By Tim Readman



## Neil Young and Crazy Horse

Americana (Reprise)

Having been lucky enough to witness Neil's journey from the beginning, both of us high school kids in Winnipeg, nothing he does really surprises anymore. He's done it all, front and centre on a world stage. He's beyond reviews but everyone has an opinion about his work.

So, it's great to hear the grizzled raggedy ass sound of Crazy Horse again—has it really been almost 10 years? And what they do to songs we've all heard since kindergarten is both amazing and a true WTF moment. I guarantee nobody saw this album coming so I guess I was wrong—he still can surprise...and put a grin on your face.

*God Save the Queen*, segueing into *My Country 'tis of Thee* with a school choir—brilliant. *This Land Is Your Land*, in its entirety—sublime. The murder ballad *Tom Dula*—fantastic.

If you heard about the album and thought, 'That's too goofy, even for Neil', check it out. The power to surprise should only be used for good, not evil and Neil, once again, blows expectations out of the park in the best possible way.

— By les siemieniuk

## Bill Evans

In Good Company (Native and Fine Records)

The title of this album is understated. Ace banjo player Bill Evans finds himself in the company of some of the best acoustic musicians in the world, and with their help he gives a clinic about the amazing range of his instrument.

Evans is a learned banjo player. He learned historical techniques of the 19th and early 20th century, he has studied

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- Sept 22 Kingston, ON @ Chalmers United w/ The Kindness Killers
- Sept 27 Halifax, NS @ Spatz Theatre w/ Julie Dorion
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under such bluegrass greats as Sonny Osborne and J.D. Crowe, has authored numerous instruction books, and taught the likes of Jayme Stone.

For this new disc he recruited ex-students and ex-bandmates, and the list reads like a *Who's Who* of acoustic music: Tim O'Brien, Rob Ickes, David Grier, Mike Marshall, the bands Joy Kills Sorrow and the Infamous Stringdusters, and the list goes on.

With five Evans originals, traditional songs such as *Follow The Drinking Gourd*, a good dose of traditional and alternative bluegrass, and a Beatles medley ending in a cranked up version of *A Hard Day's Night*, this album will appeal to aficionados of this type of music and show the novice that bluegrass is far more than *Foggy Mountain Breakdown*. And it might just nudge a few to take up the banjo.

— By Mike Sadava

## Los Lobos

Kiko 20th anniversary edition/Kiko Live/Kiko Live DVD  
(Hollywood Records/Slash Records)

It's a task that's never been previously done: where a band not only re-released a pivotal album with bonus demo tracks and so on but also recorded a new live version of that album complete from start to finish and also put out that version as a concert DVD with interviews but that's exactly what Los Lobos did on this triple-threat release. The 1992 release of *Kiko* was a landmark for the band because their experimentation with legendary producer Mitchell Froom and engineer Tchad Blake took them out of the traditional rock, traditional Mexican, or Tex-Mex categories their music had been pigeon-holed in and out into more poetic realms, where all



their influences blurred together and made something new that escaped all genres. The 20th-anniversary CD, besides being re-mastered, also contains demo versions of a couple of the songs and a three-song "live" sampler. It's interesting on a song like *Rio De Tenampa*, which, though denser on the studio version, sounds more direct and mournful on the demo. If you like the live sound the band created on the bonus tracks, you definitely need the *Kiko Live* CD, recorded live at The House of Blues in San Diego, CA, on Feb. 24, 2006, which features new drummer Cougar Estrada, who started playing with them in 2002. The DVD not only features the songs but has interviews and reminiscences with band members inter-cut throughout the concert explaining their history and why they decided to revisit the album now. As a bonus, it also has a three-song encore and additional interviews. Little touches like the band bringing out Dave Jr. (David Hidalgo's son) or adding a horn section for a mariachi influence are also nice. If you're a fan of the original album, all three are must-haves. If you haven't previously checked out the

disc, this multiple package offers lots of choices to check it out. Any way you like it, it's great stuff.

— By Barry Hammond

## Old Man Luedecke

Tender Is The Night (True North Records)

Let it be said from the outset that the pride of Chester, NS, remains as delightfully unique a character as ever. How many singer-songwriters that compose on the clawhammer banjo do you know? The list might fit on the head of a pin. *Tender Is The Night* picks up where his last two Juno Award-winning discs left off. All the elements are in place—the warm engaging voice and deceptively simple but attractive melodies. This time around, it sounds as

though he has surrounded himself with a larger than usual coterie of talented musical friends (I'm working off a white label advance copy here).

Whatever, it sounds as though Doc Watson's pickin' and grinin' on the whimsical *Long Suffering Jesus*. Indeed, the Biblical allegories continue through such social commentaries as *Kingdom Come* and *Jonah And The Whale*. While the *Tortoise And The Hare* retains his affection for old-time tunes, *Tender Is The Night* bounces effortlessly around the acoustic musical landscape, drawing from bluegrass (*I'm Fine, I Am, I Am*) to traditional country (*Broken Heart Buddy*). There's even a beautiful, heart-felt singalong *Song For Ian Tyson*. Collectively, then, a worthy and wonderful addition to his impressive canon.

— By Roddy Campbell

## Nuala Kennedy

Noble Stranger (Compass Records)

Nuala Kennedy is an Irish singer and flute player who is going from strength to strength. Her first release was primarily traditionally influenced, whereas her second album stretched a little more into other musical styles. She released *Enthralled*



## Reviews

# THE SHEEPDOGS



After appearing on the cover of Rolling Stone magazine, a gold album and multiple Juno Award wins... Canada's own The Sheepdogs return with their highly anticipated self-titled album produced by Patrick Carney of The Black Keys

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with Oliver Schroer just before his untimely death a couple of years ago, which showed her to be a match for his musical adventurousness. On *Noble Stranger* she shows that she has now developed a sound that is unmistakably her own. It is also the sound of an artist coming of age.

Her band, Donald Hay (percussion), Mike Bryan (guitar) and Iain Macleod (mandolin and banjo), provides exemplary accompaniment, while her flute and voice do the rest. She is an exceptional flautist but it is her voice that truly captivates on this collection. Her delivery is wonderfully expressive and her use of vibrato and ornamentation serves to pull the listener closer, as she delivers both melody and story in compelling fashion. She also adds some ear-catching lines to songs like *Gabriel Sings* and *My Bonny Labouring Boy* on an old Casio keyboard, which are both quirky and charming.

This is an outstanding CD from an exceptional talent that will satisfy those with a taste for traditional Celtic music, as well as anyone who enjoys musical innovation.

— By Tim Readman

### Lindi Ortega

Cigarettes & Truckstops (*Last Gang*)

Torontonian Ortega is probably better known, or at least has enjoyed more exposure, as a backup singer for the likes of Brandon Flowers from The Killers, but the singer/songwriter has been releasing music under her own name for more than a decade, and last year's *Little Red Boots* was even nominat-

ed for a roots Juno. The appeal of her heart-sore quaver and classic country grounding are manifest from the first notes of her present effort, which enjoys a considerable instrumental boost from producer Colin Linden—check out the sweet tangle of Dobro that kicks off *Murder of Crows*—and a crack rhythm section. It's a uniformly solid, at times exciting, set of music with the excitement even vested in slower tunes like the shivery, shimmering *High*. As you might have guessed by the title, though, Ortega's songs are so grounded in classic country tropes that it tends to feel like homage rather than a free-standing artistic statement. That said, you can't have too many sad country songs about getting wasted.

— By Scott Lingley

### Kelly Joe Phelps

Brother Sinner and the Whale (Black Hen Music)

With nine releases in 17 years, Kelly Joe Phelps is more studied than prolific. Yet as he reveals each new chapter in his musical story, his rich personal growth is fully documented. With his '95 debut *Lead Me On* he announced a fresh take on authenticity that hasn't faltered since, leaning on his sizeable skills as a fingerpicking, bottleneck slide guitarist with a slightly rasped, swamp-splashed voice perfectly matched to the gospel and prewar blues material he seemed to specialize in, together with his seamless originals.

As time moves on, he has surpassed all predictions with the poetic touch of his original tunes and his voice has become the rich musical

counterpart to his phenomenal gifts on guitar.

*Brother Sinner and the Whale* is more of the same—much to look forward to, themed to the *Old Testament's* book of *Jonah*. This is not to say that Phelps has been necessarily born again or even, perhaps, for the first time—the book of *Jonah* presents him with a somewhat ironic, narrative drama between a passive man and an active God. The soulful, old-time gospel category has always been one of the more consistent arrows in Phelps's always-innovative, creative quiver. That this concept fits him like a glove can be no surprise—yet it's still a thrill to hear how far he takes it.

Two instrumentals stand tall: *Spit Me Outta The Whale* is simply a graceful blend of solo fingerstyle guitar to smooth, sultry slide while *Brother Pilgrim* takes on a slightly harder edge but no less graceful thanks to Phelps's deft touch on National Steel. *Hard Time They Never Go Away* is a double-handed extravaganza, delivered with gentle caress of his soulful vocal. *Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah* is a personal favourite, recalling a treasured hymn from the days of being dragged to church. Had I heard this first version first, Lord knows where I'd be now.

— By Eric Thom

## Suzie Vinnick

Live at Bluesville (*Independent*)

The mega-talented Suzie Vinnick has turned a corner with the release of this spectacularly recorded live merging of her blues side to her more singer/songwriter self. Recorded for Bill Wax's *Bluesville* show on Sirius, it reveals Ms. Vinnick in fine form. Possessed of an angel's voice, her greatest strides forward are found in her guitar-playing ability, as



evidenced here.

And although she's been in the news for her blues abilities in the wake of *Me'n'Mabel*, covers songs here by the likes of Willie Dixon (*You'll Be Mine*) and Rick Fines (*Calling Out Your Name*), a quick scan of her choice of original tunes and covers reveals the fact that she's simply an incredible stylist with sufficient chops to pull off this too-short, one-woman-band release, knocking it out of the park.

Whether you want to label this blues or otherwise doesn't really matter. She's just so good at what she does, she doesn't need to go changing it. Buddy & Julie Miller, Kevin Welch, Steve Winwood? All putty in her talented hands. Reworking her own co-write (with Stephen Fearing and Tom Wilson) of *Looking For A Kiss* makes a good thing better while

Winwood's *Can't Find My Way Home* is half-too-short at a blissful four minutes. The only thing missing from this 27-minute disc is another 40 minutes worth of time spent with the inimitable Ms. V.

— By Eric Thom

## Lil' Ed and the Blues Imperials

Jump Start (*Alligator*)

Lil' Ed Williams's popularity is not the result of there being so few Chicago-based, fire-starting blues bands left. It's because he's consistently served up the goods for 25-plus years and is only getting better. By better, incendiary is the word that comes to mind and the Imperials' live show has long been one of the Top 10 things to do in Chi-town for fans of the genre and a good night out.

To compress so much sizzle and personality onto a studio recording has always been Lil' Ed's biggest challenge. *Jump Start* comes close as a raucous, rocking outlet for this seasoned band. You get what you expect—from over the top, slash'n'burn slide workouts to Ed's patented use of genre-bending humour, trash-talking guitars and the deep-cutting balladry that ably demonstrates his intense love of his craft. Standout tracks

include the all-angles-covered *Musical Mechanical Electrical Man*, updating the back door man's proposed career path. Likewise, *Jump Right In* may or may not be about swimming while *Weatherman* covers off the art of stormy relationships. All songs here are originals, save J.B. Hutto's *If You Change Your Mind*—which Ed delivers with the same stinging intensity as his uncle. A highlight is the heartfelt *Life Is A Journey*, which Lil' Ed has co-written with his wife (and on eight other originals), featuring a sinus-clearing solo that epitomizes the shivers this band can deliver live. The sole clunker is Ed's well-meaning *Moratorium On Hate*, in which he learns the pitfalls of working with five-syllable words, regardless of how noble the cause. All in all, *Jump Start* does exactly what it promises to do—deliver a life-giving boost of defibrillator output to lift you out of any dull state. No decent party should start without one.

— By Eric Thom

## JP Hoe

Mannequin (*Independent*)

*Mannequin* is fresh and surprising. Winnipeg singer/songwriter JP Hoe writes with a quirky sense of humour. Hard to categorize, Hoe's delivery has a pop sensibility. The production is clean and flatters





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the material. The Luke Doucet co-write, *Conversation*, is the source for the album title and is a thinking person's lyric to a tune that could find a place on top 40 radio. Hoe's vocals on *Conversation* are reminiscent of David Gates but this is not a song that Bread would have recorded. *Lions And Tigers* has more hooks than a cloak room. *Bittersweet* is just that. *Mannequin* is Hoe's fourth release and well worth your time and money.

— By Ruth Blakely

## Dale Boyle

Throwback (Independent)

Montreal based singer/songwriter Dale Boyle's *Throwback* is a stripped down acoustic focused album of well written songs with a soulful delivery. Fans of Steve Earle will find a lot to like about *It's All Gone Now*, which should find a home on Americana radio. Boyle produced the project by himself and the simple approach requires songs that can stand on their own. The magical *You Might Come Around* features Wailin' Jenny's vocalist Annabelle Chvostek and takes full advantage of the ethereal quality of her delivery. Boyle's cover of *Won't Back Down* could have used some tweaking in the mix but that's a minor criticism for a project with material this strong.

— By Ruth Blakely



## The Bills

Yes Please (Independent)

A pleasing—and polite—conflation of bluegrass, western swing, Gypsy jazz, zydeco, Atlantic music and straight-up country (this is not a complete list), the latest release from west coasters The Bills (formerly the Bill Hilly Band) has wit, bounce and fire to spare. This isn't some mishmash of styles thrown at the wall by some merry band of show-offs to see what sticks but a skilled integration of inspirations and influences played out on mandolin, fiddle, accordion, acoustic guitar and bass.

Starting out roughly in bluegrass mode with *Hallowed Hall*, the band exposes their

bench depth over the course of 13 tunes, alternating instrumentals and vocal tunes that feature tight harmonies, tight arrangements and tight rhyme schemes (cf: *Gale In My Sail* and *Blackberry, Ivy and Broom*). If you find yourself longing for that sunny folk fest feeling as the days grow shorter and the leaves start to fall, a simple solution to tide you over to next festival season might be to say *Yes Please*.

— By Scott Lingley

## Old Crow Medicine Show / Mumford & Sons / Edward Sharpe & The Magnetic Zeros

Big Easy Express DVD (S2BN Films)

Although it's less a concert film than a documentary of an event, Emmett Malloy's film, *Big Easy Express*, still manages to pack a lot of music into its 67-minute running time. The three bands featured, Mumford & Sons, Edward Sharpe & The Magnetic Zeros, and Old Crow Medicine Show, are a good fit for this kind of on-the-road film as they're young, energetic, and share a love of folk roots that comes through in their music. They can jam with one another because their inspirations come

from similar places. The film documents a short tour they undertook together, travelling on a special train, starting in Oakland, CA, and ending up in New Orleans, LA, with stops in San Pedro, AZ, Tempe, AZ, Marfa, TX, and Austin, TX, along the way. As is said in one of the short voice-over interviews, "2,800 miles in a week and a half... 160 people on a train." It's kind of a love poem to America, train travel, train songs, folk music, the companionship of musicians, their audiences, and the back parts of the country (both urban and wild scenery) that can be seen from trains, set to music from the bands' repertoires and their jamming sessions (both on the train and onstage from the various concerts performed in each city).

The bands and the exuberant crowds obviously had a good time and that feeling comes through in the film. Just a couple of the memorable images are huge piles of cumulonimbus clouds stacking up in the sunset as the bands play Austin, or the beaming faces of the Austin high school band, who are taught to play Mumford & Sons's *The Cave* for a short onstage slot. The film does a good job capturing the atmo-



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sphere and intensity of the tour and the interaction between the bands and their music—a lot of things in a short space of time—a tribute to the director's editing process. Extras on the Blu-Ray + DVD combo pack include deleted scenes, a short interview with the director, photo gallery and trailer.

— By Barry Hammond

## Old Crow Medicine Show

*Carry Me Back* (ATO Records)

Working with another outside producer, the British whiz Tedd Hutt, who's helmed sessions by Gaslight Anthem and Flogging Molly (among others), the Old Crow boys have varied their sound slightly on the new disc but not to the degree of harming the great chemistry they have together. There's also a new member, Cory Younts, multi-talented on mandolin, vocals, percussion, guitar and keyboards. It may be these two who've shifted the band to a tinge more traditional bluegrass feel. The difference is only a minor flavour note in the stew that is Old Crow, however. The main taste is still old-time music, with great songwriting, blended with the energy of not-quite-young punks. Longtime associate Critter Fuqua is listed only as a special guest



Annie Lou

on this disc, adding accordion and harmony vocals on but two tracks. Jim Lauderdale also contributes vocals and a co-writing credit on one of the outstanding tracks, *Half Mile Down*, about the submersion of a town caused by the building of a dam. There's a flock of other great songs: the terrific *Levi*, about a dead soldier, *Carry Me Back To Virginia, Ain't It Enough?, Mississippi Saturday Night, Country Gal* (with its tip of the hat to Hank Williams's Hey Good Lookin'). The influences range from there and Bill Monroe, through Bob Dylan to The Band but all are delivered with the knockout punch of talent combined with intelligence and spirit that's marked every outing by this remarkable group. Another winner.

— By Barry Hammond

## Annie Lou

*Grandma's Rules For Drinking* (Independent)

There's an intoxicating quality to this sophomore release by this acclaimed ensemble, hot on the heels of their Juno-nominated debut in 2010. It makes you feel warm and fuzzy, and transports you back to simpler times, at the barn dance, sipping from a flask and twirling around the dance floor with your beloved.

All this old-time merriment flows from the wonderful songs written by Anne Louise Genest. She's an old-time prodigy, already at top form. Then there is the exemplary playing by Genest (lead vocals, guitar, banjo), Kim Barlow, an accomplished solo artist in her own right (vocals, banjo), John Showman (fiddle), Max Heine-man (upright bass), Frank Ev-

ans (banjo), Kristin Cavoukian (vocals), and Andrew Collins (mandolin, guitar).

Each song is sung and played with skill, humour and gusto with fine talent and craftsmanship throughout, just what you'd expect from a genre rooted in traditional values.

The occasional burst of irreverence and saucy lyrics bespeak modern sensibilities; though they would never pass muster 60 years ago they are tame by 21st century standards.

— By Doug Swanson

## Cris Cuddy

*The Boy From Beaumont* (Independent)

Chris Cuddy is a Toronto music veteran. He's played in the bands Max Mouse & The Gorillas (whose ranks have included Dennis Delorme of Prairie Oyster, Roly Platt who also played with Ronnie Hawkins, and Hugh MacMillan from Spirit Of The West), Bacon Fat, and Pure Pork. He's released a string of solo discs: *October Morning* (2006), *Heartbeat* (2007), *This Little World* (2009), and *Diamond Shine* (2010), whose players and producers have included the likes of Fats Kaplin, Andrew Hardin, Kevin Breit, Gene Taylor and members of Mary Margaret O'Hara and Big Sugar. The experience shows. There are

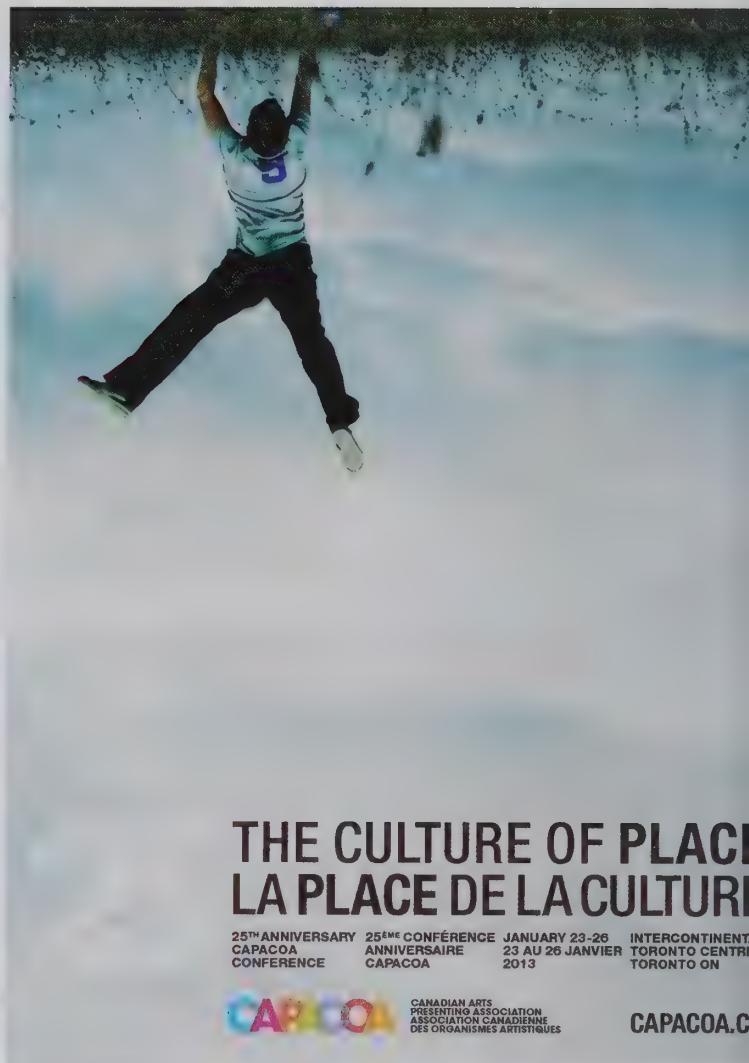


Old Crow Medicine Show



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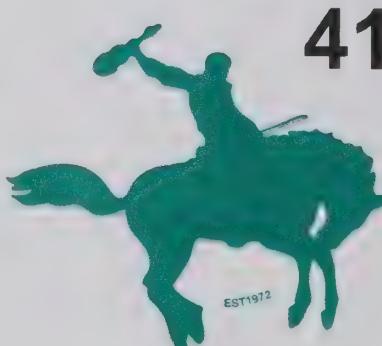


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some great songs recorded into great tracks here: *Overnight Sensation* is a song about the long grind of making it in the music business, *The Boy From Beaumont (The Kid from Bakersfield)* a tribute to Buck Owens, *Better Days* contemplates how fast you can rise and fall, *Mr. Moon* a take on young love, or *They Don't Make Them Like That Anymore* that muses on the deaths of Hank Cochran, Mickey Newbury, and Larry Jon Wilson. Hell, pretty much every track is steeped with the authenticity of a real musician whose every note and word is meant from the core of him, and the same applies to the supporting cast: the likes of Keith Glass, Dennis Pendarth, Emory Lester, Bob Taillefer and many others. Strong stuff.

— By Barry Hammond

## Amadou & Mariam

Folila (Because/Nonesuch)

It may be trail-blazing, but it doesn't feel like a pioneering effort. The days of self-conscious "cultural blends" are long past, and Amadou & Mariam are leading the charge. The title of their new album says it all: *Folila* simply means "music" in the Bambara language. Tracks vary with shadings of AfroPop, blues, traditional Malian, etc., but Amadou's guitar never fails to rock. Hooky choruses sung in Bambara, French and English meld together and stick in your brain. From the opener *Dougou Badia*, featuring Mariam paired with American singer Santigold, A&M declare that the musician's role is to "cheer people up and make them happy".

The album's many guests were invited to co-create songs: England's prog-soul diva Ebony Bones; Scissor Sisters lead man Jake Shears; the Yeah Yeah Yeah's Nick Zinner;



Amadou and Mariam

Tunde and Kyp from TV On The Radio; up and coming Brooklyn rapper Theophilus London; and Noir Desir's Bertrand Cantat, who are not shown off so much as absorbed into a new pop music which yes, has Bambara lyrics, and yes, traditional Malian scales, but its throbbing energy doesn't need explication. The message is: dance.

Originally designed to be two albums: one recorded in New York with pop musicians, the other recorded in Bamako with African friends, A & M decided to mate the two, with the mix taking place in Paris.

As a catalyst for an emerging global culture, critical reaction to *Folila* runs the spectrum from BBC's dismissing the "cameos calling the attention of new listeners", to the smug American reviewer who proclaimed that although he'd usually "pass on the chance to even briefly listen to a West African blues act", in this instance, "it turns out I really like *Folila*".

It's a brave new world. How da ya like it so far?

— By Lark Clark

but then the band launches into the banjo-driven whirlwind of *Walt Whitman* and you just know this album's going to be a keeper. Thereafter there are songs of regret (*Widower's Heart*), songs of hope (*Keys to Paradise*), and acres and acres of gorgeous mando/fiddle/banjo goodness. After TbT's showings at Canadian folk festivals this summer expect *Stars and Satellites* on plenty of this year's best-of lists.

— By Richard Thornley

## Rick Estrin and the Nightcats

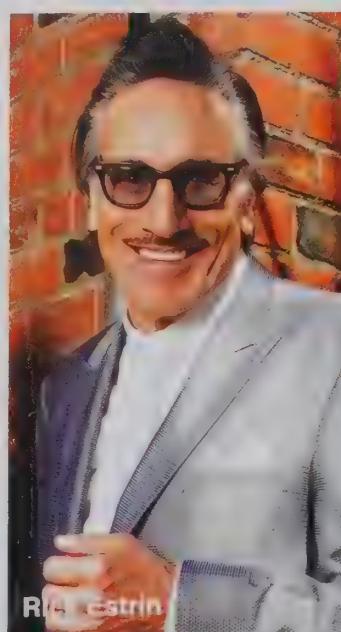
One Wrong Turn (Alligator)

This tight group is blazing its own path in the blues world, setting ears on fire with staccato harp attacks, sizzling guitars, juicy organ licks and a throbbing drumbeat. These guys find the groove then ride it until they've ground it into submission.

Estrin, who does the vast majority of the writing, supplies vocals and harmonica and is joined by Chris (Kid) Andersen (guitars, keyboards, bass, background vocals), Lorenzo Farrell (organ, bass, piano), and J. Hansen (drums, percussion, vocals). A host of guest musicians sit in on various tracks on the 12-song disc.

Estrin had put in 30-plus years with Little Charlie and the Nightcats. When Charlie Baty retired in 2008, Estrin stepped forward and they recruited Chris (Kid) Andersen—fresh from playing with Charlie Musselwhite—to lay down the smokin'-hot guitar riffs.

Andersen's instrumental *The Legend of Taco Cobbler* closes the album. It's a melding of a surfer groove with a spaghetti western soundtrack, like The Surfaris mashed up with Sergio Leone and Ennio Morricone; the construct reminded me of



Rick Estrin

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Edgar Winter's *Frankenstein* from the 1970s. This is their second album in this incarnation and one has to believe there will be many more. Truly sensational.

— By Doug Swanson

### Jim Byrnes

I Hear The Wind In The Wire (Black Hen Music)

If you're a fan of the classic country narrative singers of the 1950s and '60s, guys like Marty Robbins, Jim Reeves, Johnny Cash, the Statler Brothers, or Webb Pierce, Jim Byrnes's new release, *I Hear The Wind In The Wire*, will be right up your alley. Byrnes, born in St. Louis, has lived in Canada since the mid-1970s. He's known as a blues singer and an actor but verges into country and gospel on this disc. It's a collection of covers by great songwriters like Hank Snow, Bill Anderson, Gordon Lightfoot, Dolly Parton, Buck Owens, Marty Robbins, Nick Lowe, Tom Waits, and Carter Stanley.

Byrnes's gruff-but-sweet pipes are perfect for this type of material and he sings the heck out of these songs, nailing but underplaying the emotion for even greater effect. An equal pleasure to Byrnes's voice is the truly fabulous slide,



Tedeschi Trucks Band

electric, acoustic and pedal steel guitar playing of producer Steve Dawson. Anyone who can hear Dawson play and not be moved is made of stone. Together, they've produced a genuinely great disc (with not a little help from the remaining cast of fabulous session players). This just might be one of the discs for which Byrnes will be best remembered.

— By Barry Hammond

### Belle Starr

The Burning Of Atlanta EP (Starfish)

Take three extremely talented Canadian fiddle players and singers (one of whom also step dances) and put them together in a group where they find they can play off one another's strengths and you've got Belle Starr, a musical group named after the dime-novel-popularized, Missouri-born, American outlaw of the 1800s.

The group consists of Guelph, ON, born Miranda Mulholland, who's played in The Mahones and the Great Lake Swimmers, Alberta-born Kendel Carson, whose solo efforts were produced by legendary songwriter and performer Chip Taylor, and Stephanie Cadman from Ottawa. The EP precedes a full-blown disc to come later this year. The five songs on this sampler are uniformly

strong efforts. The women all have fine voices and can play their instruments with flair and character.

Their version of Talking Heads' *This Must Be The Place (Naive Melody)* is produced by the multi-talented singer/guitarist/songwriter Danny Michel, and this arrangement holds its own favourably with the Heads' own take.

Suzie Ungerleider (Oh Susanna)'s *Little White Lies* is produced by the group themselves, and Fred Eaglesmith's *Summerlea*, Dolly Parton's classic *Jolene*, and Jenny Whiteley's title song are all helmed by Russell Broom (Jann Arden). It's a very solid debut. Expect to hear a lot more from these women.

— By Barry Hammond

### Tedeschi Trucks Band

Live: Everybody's Talking (Sony Music)

There's no denying the influences of the Allman Brothers and Lynyrd Skynyrd on this soaring, majestic release from the South's power couple. Smear that with the powerful vocal attacks by Susan Tedeschi, who more than holds her own in the manner of Bonnie Raitt and Janis Joplin, and you have a jam band that would leave people delirious in the

aisles.

Recorded at Toronto, ON, Washington, DC, and Bridgeport, CT, there are only 11 titled tracks on this two-disc album, which gives you some sense of the time allowed for extended guitar solos, musical interaction, and instrumental noodling. The cover of *Darling Be Home Soon* by John Sebastian is transcendent, a gateway to less-complicated times. Disc 2 wavers a fair ways into jazzy territory, an indulgence afforded Derek Trucks, and why not? He's good at it.

I was going to bitch about the dreadful photography on the cover but time's up.

— By Doug Swanson

### Stan Rogers

Turnaround – Re-mastered (Borealis Records)

Between the Breaks...Live! – Re-mastered (Borealis Records)

Last year Borealis released a re-mastered collection of Stan Rogers, *The Very Best Of*, and followed that in January with the first of Stan's five original recordings, *Fogarty's Cove*, and now out come *Turnaround* and *Between the Breaks...Live!*.

A few years ago I railed against re-releases as a money grab for record labels and a putdown of artists with new material that lose out on the money spent on re-releasing



Jim Byrnes

old material. Well, nothing is ever black and white except the zebra. The current generation of music aficionados have grown up on MP3s and crappy headphones attached to an iPod or smart phone—not the ideal format for the nuances of great music. And great music this is. No one has released a body of work that, almost 30 years after his death, continues to sell and be discovered by new fans daily.

But besides the release in the CD format with the latest technology, Borealis will also be selling downloads in hi-res versions. Stan's albums are the first but they plan adding more hi-res album downloads of their entire roster. Good on 'em. Let's get back to quality audio for quality music.

That said, it was wonderful to be reminded how great Stan's

work is and how it stands the test of time. If you don't get the new versions at least pull out your old ones and take a re-listen; I hadn't played *Song of the Candle* or *Harris and the Mare* in years...shame on me.

— By les siemieniuk

## Peggy Seeger

Peggy Seeger (Appleseed Recordings)

This recording captures Peggy at age 76, live in New Zealand at a benefit for the Nelson Woman's Centre. The performance includes American folk songs, a few originals, and some interesting and amusing stories and poems. There's also incisive political commentary and entertaining between-song banter, including *Eagle And Condom* where she delivers a recitation reflecting on the U.S.A.'s choice of national

icons that suggests that the condom is the more appropriate because, "It makes you feel safe when you're really being screwed."

While tuning the banjo, she asks, "Anyone here have perfect pitch?" and then quips, "I pity you!" Her most well-known song is *I'm Gonna Be An Engineer*, which she wryly refers to as her albatross. She delivers a fine version here ending with the defiant, "*I'll fight them as a woman not a lady, I'll fight them as an engineer*". In *Missing* she sings movingly of the disappearances of people in Chile after Salvador Allende took power in the early '70s. Other highlights include the traditional songs *I've Been A Bad Bad Girl* and *Fatal Flower Garden*. Peggy Seeger recently concluded her final tour of

the U.S.A. Live appearances from here on will likely be few and far between. Luckily this recording gives future generations the chance to hear one of the folk revival's most potent protest singers in top form.

— By Tim Readman

## Matt Gordon and Leonard Podolak

Three Thin Dimes (*Independent*)

One of the things that I like most about old-time music is its humility. It's simple music, performed purely for the love of it (musicians don't get rich playing old-timey). Matt Gordon and Leonard Podolak (and Bill Shanley, who produces and also plays guitar) embody this spirit in *Three Thin Dimes*. Both have lives and careers aside from this duo, yet they come together here because of their shared

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# Reviews

appreciation of the music. The treat for us is some top-notch singing and playing on a raft of classic and less well-known pieces: the beautiful fiddle and banjo duet on *Farewell Trion*, a jaunty (not a word I use too often) *Barlow Knife*, and a great take on *Colored Aristocracy*. But play any track and I defy you not to smile, it's all that good. Warm, communal music that just might be one of the best things America ever produced.

— By Richard Thornley

## Cara Luft

Darlingford (Blue Case Tunes)

Cara's third solo recording comes after a five-year hiatus from her last one. This ex-Calgarian and ex-Wailin' Jenny recorded Darlingford at various places across the Prairies, including the Darlington United Church in Manitoba, and in a few other places across Canada, the U.K. and the U.S.A.

It's been worth the wait, as the life experiences of the past five years have resulted in a mature set of songs, some contemporary such as the stories of *Dallaire*, a paean to the Canadian general and senator, or *Charged*, a comical re-telling of a run-in with American border guards, and some straight out of the tradition with lovely reworkings of *The Ploughboy and the Cockney* and *He Moved Through the Fair*.

Cara's in fine voice on *Darlingford* and Lloyd Peterson uses a deft hand, letting the simple production enhance the songs rather than them



**Robin and Linda Williams**

over. Although recorded at various locations, it hangs together very well and it's a lovely piece of work from an artist in fine form at this stage of her career.

— By les siemieniuk

## Robin and Linda Williams

These Old Dark Hills (Red House Records)

Calling harmonies seamless may be an overused cliché. But really, it's the only way to describe the blending of the voices of Robin and Linda Williams.

This duo from Virginia, with the Fine Band, has been putting out consistently enjoyable albums of string band music for more than three decades, and this latest is no exception. With some help from ringers like bassist Todd Phillips and Dobro/pedal steel player Al Perkins, and even some backup vocals from American humorist Garrison Keillor, they are in fine form.

While most of the songs are written by Robin and Linda, they have chosen their covers well, includ-

ing an adaptation of Lord Tennyson's *Crossing The Bar*, a poem about a sailor hoping there will be no sadness when he puts out to sea.

But my favourite is *Tessi Mae*, a bouncy little song about getting your heart stolen by a pooch, and proclaiming, "Hey hey, your straying days are over."

— By Mike Sadava

## Sprag Session

Sprag Session (Independent)

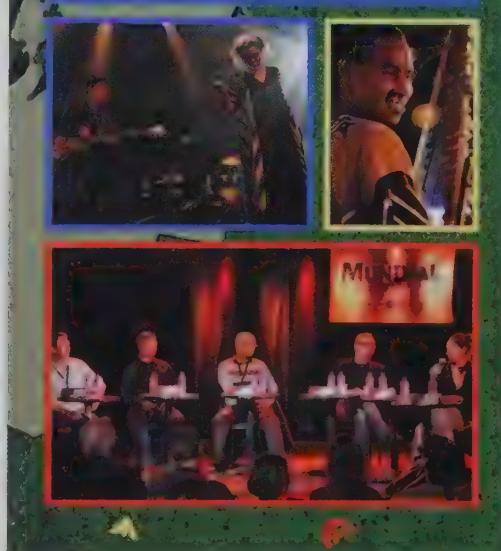
They used to be the Colin Grant Band, and having shared the stage with them at CelticFest Vancouver I know how bloody good they are. This is Cape Breton music that loses none of its traditional power as it is blended with very funky contemporary rhythms. I am well aware that fusion music of this kind often falls flat on its face and fails to meet both its trad and contemporary aspirations. In this particular case, though, these young gents have it down cold.

Jason Roach (piano),  
Darren MacMullen



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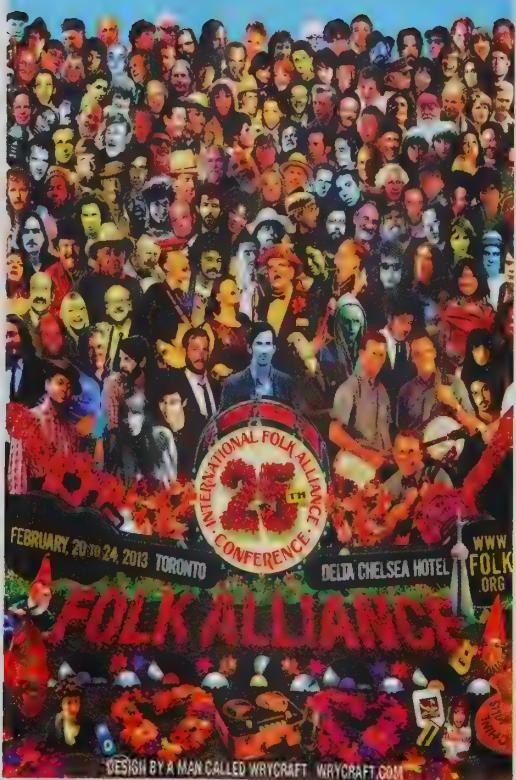
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# Reviews

it's about  
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(mandolin, guitar, banjo), Colin Clarke (drums) and Donnie Calabrese (bass) join fiddler Grant on an inspired and inventive journey through 12 instrumental sets of trad and original tunes, the latter being composed by either Grant or Roach. The grooves are rock solid and always imaginative and the instrumental work of the strings and the piano darts, ducks and weaves over the top with impressive fluidity.

If you are looking for similarities you could maybe cite Shooglenifty or The Peatbag Faeries... when they were younger. For now I do believe these lads have few equals. *Sprag Session* is staying on my stereo and I am playing it loud. This one blows the roof off, folks!

— By Tim Readman

## Shawn Colvin

All Fall Down (Nonesuch)

Jon Levanthal has been a constant presence with Shawn Colvin as a co-writer and producer but this time around she takes to the studio with Buddy Miller. As expected, it has an effect, with his trademark stripped-down production, Shawn's voice shines and the guitars of Miller and Bill Frisell help with the spit and polish.

Colvin co-wrote eight of the songs here, three with Levanthal and others with Patty Griffin, Jakob Dylan, Frisell, Kenny White and Victor Krauss. It's a wonderfully melancholy look at love and the state of the union in 2012, especially with a terrific cover of Rod MacDon-



Shawn Colvin

ald's *American Jerusalem*.

Besides the sublime production, Shawn's efforts are underscored and enhanced by the participation of Emmylou Harris, Dylan and Julie Miller.

A lovely piece of work, then, to add to her already terrific catalogue.

— By les siemieniuk

## David Newland

Give It a Whirl (Independent)

Since his debut disc, *Evergreen* (2003), David Newland made a limited edition recording, *Roll Away* (2005); he's written the theme song for and performed in the CTV railroad feature *Canada's Greatest Ride*, writes and performs poetry called *Zen Canadiana*, and He organizes and stages

ukulele workshops, like the ones featured in *The Gospel According To Uke* on CBC. As a result of all this activity, the new disc is a big leap forward in style and maturity.

His songwriting—which celebrates the basic, small-town, homey pleasures of things like

bare feet on a gravel road, strawberry season, and autumn leaves—while universal, is precise and beautifully integrated into the music in a way that seems inevitable.

His voice has become a warm, comfortable instrument, whose words you absolutely believe when he sings them (think Paul Simon). The musicians are all top notch: great guitarists like (producer) Gregg Lawless, Burke Carroll, and Steve Briggs, fiddle from Drew Jurecka, gorgeous backing vocals from Kirsten Jones, DALA (Sheila Carabine and Amanda Walther) and Sue Passmore, and tight funky drumming from Mark Kelso. Great stuff!

— By Barry Hammond

## The Albion Band

The Vice Of The People (Powered Flight Music)

For those of you unaware of the history of English folk-rock, The Albion Band were originally conceived, brought together and led by the original Fairport

# Reviews

Convention bassist Ashley Hutchings. So why have they now reappeared on the scene, new album in tow, without a single original member? Is this some kind of tribute band or what? Apparently Mr. Hutchings wanted a new generation to take over the band. And so it has come to pass that his son, Blair Dunlop, and his colleagues have taken up the challenge. Are they any good, you ask? Well, yes, actually they are. This is classic English folk-rock with shades of Steeleye Span, Jethro Tull, Fairport and The Strawbs in evidence. Most of the songs are originals but with covers of Richard Thompson's *Roll Over Vaughan Williams*, '80s popster Nik Kershaw's *Faces* and the Villon/Beer tune *Set Their Mouths To Twisting*. The sound is bold and confident, featuring a tough-sounding rhythm section, lusty vocals and fat harmonies, and strong soloing. I have to admit I wondered at first if it was all a bit of a cash-in on the name and then I thought who gives a toss as long as it sounds good. And it does.

— By Tim Readman

## Books

### Wayward Daughter: An Official Biography of Eliza Carthy

Sophie Parkes (Soundcheck Books)

Price: \$18.06

[www.amazon.ca](http://www.amazon.ca)

Just in case you don't know, the wayward one in question is the daughter of Martin Carthy and Norma Waterson. Eliza followed in her English folk legend parents' footsteps and became an esteemed fiddler, singer and all-round musician, embracing folk, pop and many other musical styles and influences. At 35 years of age, it may seem a little early for an Eliza Carthy biography, but Sophie Parkes charges in and handles the story-so-far with unabashed relish. She obviously has a high regard for Eliza Carthy as a person and as an artist.

She tells the tale of Eliza's somewhat isolated early upbringing well enough, recounting how her identity and purpose was founded in music. Unfortunately Parkes then rather over-eggs the pudding due to a lack of editorial discipline. She gets into an unnecessary

**WAYWARD DAUGHTER**  
An Official Biography of Eliza Carthy



level of detail relating some of Eliza's formative experiences, such as playing and dancing with the Goathland Plough Stots long-sword dance team and her relationship and early musical adventures with other children of English folkies. Eliza's partnership with Nancy Kerr, which helped launch her career as an artist in her own right, is microscopically mulled over.

Elsewhere Parkes gives us a close description of promo photos taken but never used, details of an abandoned Carthy website, repeats verbatim tweets from Twitter.com and reports on Norma Waterson's food preferences during her recent hospitalization. There are still some interesting insights, such as the advent of The Ratcatchers, the recording of the seminal double CD *Red Rice*, the ill-fated record deal with Warners and Eliza's campaign to have Anglicana, i.e. English music, recognized as part of the tapestry of world music. Ultimately, though, the end result is closer to hero worship than a meaningful, objective biography.

— By Tim Readman



The Albion Band

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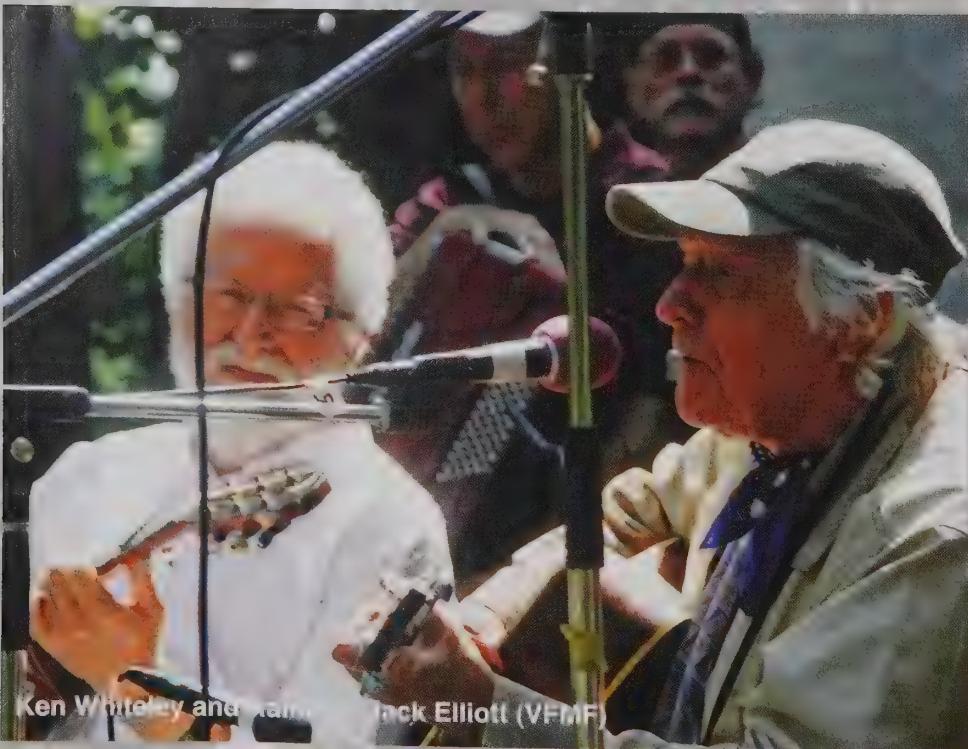
Evalyn Parry (VFMF)



*Penguin Eggs'* staff spent several weeks over the summer visiting Vancouver Island Musicfest (VIM), Vancouver (VFMF), Mission (MFMF) and Calgary (CFMF) Folk Music Festivals. Roddy Campbell brought his camera along and here are some fun shots captured at the various events.

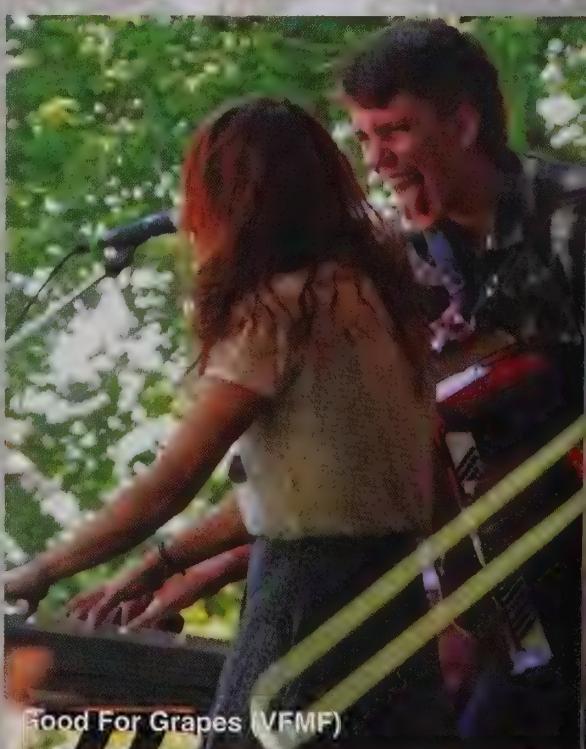


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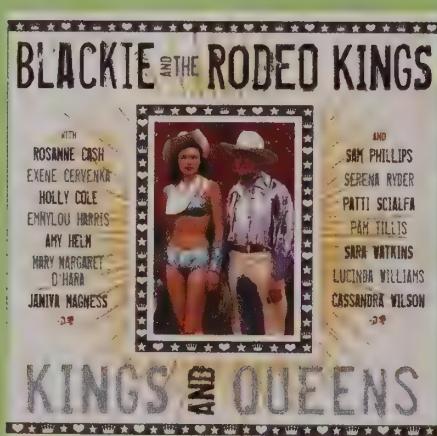
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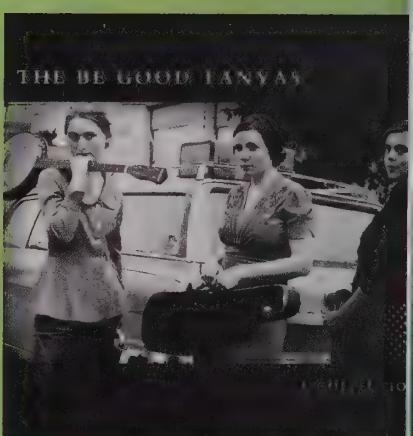
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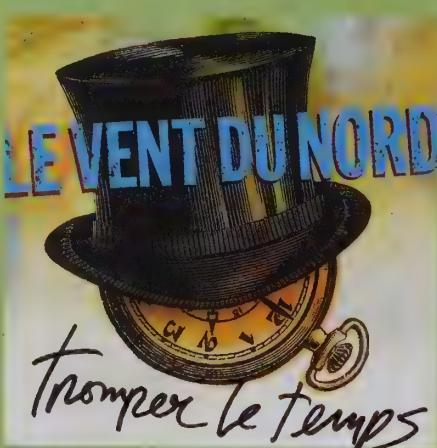
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# Travail à la pièce

Maria Dunn reste l'une des rares auteurs-compositeurs du Canada qui documente la vie des travailleurs ordinaires. *Piece By Piece*, son dernier enregistrement, touche profondément et raconte l'histoire sociale d'une fabrique de vêtements historique en Alberta. Par Tim Readman.

« Ma première incursion dans l'histoire du travail à Edmonton eut lieu il y a dix ans quand j'ai fait une résidence avec le Edmonton District Labour Council. Mon album *We Were Good People* s'inspire de ça. »

Ecoutez bien mes bonnes gens parce que ces mots sont ceux de Maria Dunn, une espèce en voie d'extinction sur la scène musicale traditionnelle folk contemporaine canadienne : une chanteuse folk qui se préoccupe de la vie des travailleurs ordinaires.

Son dernier album, *Piece by Piece*, est la partie musicale d'une « ballade vidéo » : une représentation multimédia de 60 minutes des femmes immigrantes qui travaillaient à la fabrique de vêtements GWG à Edmonton à travers ses 93 ans d'existence.

« Pour *We Were Good People*, j'ai créé un spectacle multimédia avec Don Bouzek, historien du travail et je l'ai présenté en tournée. Bousek m'a ensuite approché avec l'idée de retracer l'histoire d'une fabrique de vêtements qui avait été en opération pendant des années à Edmonton. J'étais intéressée parce qu'il y a eu beaucoup de travail de fait sur l'histoire des femmes dans les communautés agricoles, mais peu avaient étudié les femmes travaillant en ville en Alberta, et les effets sur l'immigration dans cette zone. Leurs histoires n'avaient pas encore été racontées. Ce qui a attiré les femmes immigrantes à GWG, ainsi que beaucoup de réfugiés et de nouveaux immigrants, est le fait qu'il n'était pas nécessaire de connaître bien l'anglais. En 1930, il y a eu les Italiens; après 1956, les Hongrois; en 1960, les Tchècoslovaques; après que le Canada ait levé l'interdiction sur l'immigration dans les années 60, les Chinois; les Vietnamiens vers la fin des années 70; en 1970 et 1980 des gens de l'Inde et du Pakistan, ainsi que des filles des cultivateurs ukrainiens qui avaient emménagé en ville. Leur histoire est à l'image des vagues d'immigration et je trouve fascinant d'observer différents aspects de leurs vies. »



Maria Dunn

Certaines histoires contenues dans les chansons de *Piece by Piece* sont particulièrement touchantes. « *I Cannot Tell You* » s'inspire d'une femme vietnamienne qui passait son temps à économiser pour acheter des médicaments à sa grand-mère malade, qui meurt avant qu'elle ne puisse lui envoyer le fruit de ses économies à la maison. « Ça parle aussi de la solitude ressentie par le nouvel immigrant ou réfugié. Ces gens quittent leur pays pour avoir une vie meilleure, mais font l'expérience d'une solitude déroutante. »

« *Speed Up* » s'inspire musicalement des chansons traditionnelles écossaises des Hébrides, où tout le monde chante en choeur lors du refrain. « La chanson parle de garder une bonne vitesse. Dans la fabrique, il y a tant d'opérations minutées. Plus tu travailles vite, plus tu fais de l'argent. Ces femmes cherchaient désespérément à s'établir. Elles travaillaient la fin de semaine et avaient d'autres jobs. Elles travaillaient de jour alors que leurs maris travaillaient de nuit. Elle dépensaient beaucoup d'énergie pour faire venir d'autres membres de la famille ici et pour offrir une vie meilleure à leurs enfants. Elles devaient garder le rythme. C'est important de se rappeler à quel point les nouveaux arrivants travaillent fort. On ne s'en rend pas compte. »

« *Blue Lung* » parle d'une femme ukrainienne qui n'est malheureusement plus des nôtres. Son affection pulmonaire était liée aux années passées à GWG. « On se sou-

crait peu de la santé et de la sécurité et rien n'était mis à sa disposition pour l'empêcher de respirer la poussière du denim. »

« Toutes les femmes interviewée ont raconté l'histoire de leur vie de façon poétique, si ordinaire fut-elle. Pour une auteure-compositrice-interprète, c'est une véritable mine d'or. C'était un privilège d'entendre leur histoire et d'écrire ces chansons. »

« *Farewell* » raconte l'histoire de la dernière fête que les femmes ont eu ensemble. Leur superviseur indien a chanté pour elles. Il y avait un grand sentiment de communauté. Le respect qu'elles avaient l'une pour l'autre était évident. Elles s'entraidaient et se soutenaient mutuellement. Certaines s'appellent encore aujourd'hui. Ce sont vraiment de belles femmes qui ont travaillé si fort pour réaliser le rêve de leurs enfants. De nos jours, avec la mondialisation, les entreprises déplacent leurs opérations dans des endroits où l'on paye moins les travailleurs. Quand une usine ferme au Canada, au lieu de démarrer une nouvelle entreprise avec un salaire de subsistance et des avantages sociaux à l'étranger, ils ne le font pas. Ça me fâche que des entreprises qui font des profits énormes ne donnent pas au moins le minimum aux autres pays. »

Il est important de souligner ici que *Piece by Piece* est non seulement une grande œuvre d'histoire sociale, mais également une grande œuvre musicale avec des chansons magnifiques. Les instruments et les styles musicaux servent admirablement bien les histoires. On pourra entendre des musiques

# Le Quartier Français

de l'Inde, de l'Ukraine, de l'Italie, du Viêt-nam, et d'autres, qui proviennent de plus loin encore. La production, par Shannon Johnson, est sublime (comme toujours) et le résultat est un disque débordant d'excellentes chansons qui sonnent merveilleusement bien. « Je suis un peu sortie de ma zone de confort dans les arrangements des chansons. Nous rendons hommage aux pays d'origine de ces femmes et intégrons cet hommage à nos spectacles devant public. »

C'est un projet que Maria adore manifestement et dans lequel elle a mis toute son âme. « J'ai définitivement trouvé ma voie ici en travaillant avec les groupes de travailleurs et de justice sociale qui m'invitent à réaliser des projets. Je suis tombée en amour avec la musique folk en entendant des gens comme Roy Bailey et Dick Gaughan, qui m'en ont beaucoup appris sur la justice. J'adore également la musique traditionnelle et ça se sent dans ma musique. J'adore Karan Casey et John Doyle, June Tabor et Maddy Prior. Ce sont des artistes qui m'ont vraiment touchée et qui m'ont donné envie de faire la même chose. La musique qu'on qualifie de folk de nos jours, je la vois plus comme étant de la musique pop acoustique. »

Il faut dire qu'il ne manque pas de sujet d'écriture. En ce moment, en Alberta, on tente insidieusement de privatiser les soins de santé aux aînés. Pendant ce temps, les travailleurs essaient de se syndiquer pour avoir un salaire décent et des avantages sociaux. « Il s'agit de ne pas laisser nous glisser entre les doigts tout ce pour quoi les gens se

sont battus, de ne pas oublier le nombre de personnes qui ont manifesté et participé à des grèves pour obtenir de meilleures conditions de travail, gagner en sécurité et le droit de se syndiquer. Nous devons réaliser à quel point ce fut difficile pour eux de se rendre là où nous sommes rendus.

« Je prends toute la mesure de cette relation privilégiée avec la communauté, et c'est certainement mieux que d'écrire des chansons sur ma propre vie! Si d'autres ont envie de suivre mes traces, ils n'ont qu'à m'appeler et je leur en donnerai des idées! » Quant à moi, j'espère qu'il y aura d'autres chanteurs folk prêts à accepter son offre. En attendant, on peut commencer par découvrir les pièces de *Piece by Piece*, chanter avec les choeurs et apprendre de ses histoires.

## Du Comté Clare à ici

**The Teetotallers, c'est trois des meilleurs musiciens de l'Irlande en musique traditionnelle acoustique. Ils jouent surtout des pièces rares et peu communes du répertoire de l'ouest irlandais. Tony Montague s'est empressé de mieux les connaître.**

**D**uende est un mot espagnol qui désigne l'esprit intemporel qui possède l'artiste au moment de l'inspiration suprême. Quand le nouveau

trio irlandais The Teetotallers a joué au Festival folk Mission par une morne soirée de juillet, le duende gaélique circulait allègrement entre les musiciens, émanant vers le public.

The Teetotallers sont un nouveau super-groupe de folk. Le guitariste et chanteur John Doyle, le flûtiste Kevin Crawford et le violoniste Martin Hayes manient leurs instruments avec une telle virtuosité qu'ils arrivent à dépasser le stade des prouesses techniques pour se concentrer sur l'âme et le caractère qu'ils insufflent à leur musique. Les airs sont tous traditionnels, provenant pour la plupart du Comté de Clare, mais leur interprétation est exceptionnellement originale et imaginative.

À l'apogée d'une suite de reels entrepris par Hayes, ce dernier et Doyle semblaient verrouillés l'un à l'autre : ils formaient un bloc d'intensité et de création en croissance, leurs têtes suivant le rythme de la musique, leurs corps penchés l'un vers l'autre; l'énergie craquait de partout tandis qu'ils allaient toujours plus loin dans la découverte de la nature intime du rythme, de la mélodie et de l'harmonie.

Un mélange de hasard et de destin sans conteste est à l'origine de la création du trio. Hayes, Doyle et Crawford ont joué ensemble pour la première fois il y a quelques années au Festival celtique Sebastopol, en Californie, où chacun jouait avec ses partenaires de musique habituels – Hayes avec le guitariste chicagoan Dennis Cahill; Doyle avec la violoniste chicagoane Liz Carroll; et Crawford faisait partie de l'important groupe instrumental irlandais



The Teetotallers

Lúnasa.

« Le directeur du festival aime bien faire quelque chose le dimanche : il met les noms des musiciens dans un chapeau et pique de nouvelles combinaisons », explique Crawford depuis le jardin des bières, quelques heures avant le spectacle du soir au Festival Mission.

« On n'a pas le temps de préparer le spectacle, on a une demi-heure pour décider de ce qu'on va faire. On pensait que notre prestation serait un désastre parce qu'on avait pas le temps de se préparer, mais le public a adoré. En sortant de scène, on s'est dit qu'on devrait retravailler ensemble. »

Les musiciens ont continué de parler de leur projet au téléphone et discutaient des airs potentiels par courriel. Plus tôt cette année, ils ont décidé de passer à l'acte et ont organisé une tournée en Irlande. « Nous avons passé la semaine d'avant à pratiquer et à trouver du matériel qui s'accordait avec nos styles respectifs, raconte Crawford. Nous avons réussi à forger notre son. Ça a vraiment bien été et nous avons fait une autre tournée de deux semaines à travers les États Unis à la fin du printemps. »

« Nous sommes vraiment un groupe acoustique, ajoute Hayes. En Irlande, nous avons joué à plusieurs reprises complètement acoustique, sans aucun système de son. » Les trois musiciens plongent leurs racines dans la tradition irlandaise, ne perdant jamais contact avec l'essence de la musique tout en explorant les limites de sa forme. « En tant que guitariste, John excelle à explorer les différents aspects des airs, affirme Crawford. Ce n'est pas un accompagnateur unidimensionnel. Il arrive à faire vivre la musique à travers des styles différents à chaque fois. De bien des manières, je pense qu'il est l'élément essentiel qui rend les Teetotallers attrayants pour bien des gens ».

Hayes est plutôt connu pour ses longues envolées créatives d'enchaînement d'airs et son abandon discipliné; Doyle, pour ses attaques harmoniques et mélodiques sans cesse changeantes et son talent pour l'écriture de chansons en langue traditionnelle; Crawford pour la douceur, la précision et l'aisance de son jeu. « Nous sommes trois individus qui avons emprunté des directions assez diverses en termes de style pendant la majeure partie de notre carrière, dit Hayes. Nous avons des empreintes musicales très distinctes. »

« Nous sommes tous les trois très "moment présent" lors des spectacles en direct. C'est très important que le public sache qu'on ne fait pas que suivre le programme. Nous nous impliquons vraiment et nous luttons pour faire de chaque spectacle une

réussite; et les étincelles jaillissent... »

Au sein des Teetotallers, les trois musiciens prennent particulièrement plaisir à improviser. Leur attitude rappelle celle des musiciens de jazz, bien que Doyle ne tarde pas à établir la différence entre les natures de l'improvisation jazz et folk. « Dans le jazz, il y a un début et une fin et c'est entre les deux qu'on improvise, on peut sortir davantage des sentiers battus alors que dans la musique irlandaise, la forme est continue, on élabore entre les notes, si vous voyez ce que je veux dire. »

« La mélodie de la musique irlandaise possède une certaine structure, ajoute Hayes. Si on improvise trop, on perd la structure de la mélodie. » Ni Crawford ni Hayes n'avaient déjà travaillé avec un chanteur sur une base régulière. « Ça a été une phase d'apprentissage, médite Crawford. Honnêtement, c'est toute une révélation que de comprendre le fonctionnement d'une chanson. Les airs que nous jouons sont essentiellement en lien avec le Comté de Clare et sont tous très rares ou les versions sont peu communes. C'est moi qui a trouvé probablement 90% des mélodies parce que c'est ma passion. Je suis un vrai fanatique de ce type de musique. Je parcours les archives et les vieux enregistrements. C'est ma vie. »

Au sein du trio, les musiciens se sentent capables d'interpréter les airs avec une liberté nouvelle. « J'aime être sur scène avec des gens qui vont donner un bon spectacle, quoique je fasse, commente Hayes. Quand je joue avec Dennis, le violon est très à l'avant-plan et je dois toujours être "présent". Je suis "présent" avec les Teetotallers également, mais je ressens beaucoup moins de pression. C'est très confortable. Je me sens bien là-dedans. »

Malgré toute l'inventivité des Teetotallers, la musique qu'ils font est, sur un autre plan, très simple. « C'est un genre tellement irlandais, tellement traditionnel », dit Hayes. « De la musique irlandaise, simple : un violon, une flûte, une guitare,

résume Doyle. Ça ne pourrait être plus simple : une suite de deux airs, joués trois fois ensemble. »

Cet automne, The Teetotallers entrent en studio pour réaliser leur premier album, et planifient plus de tournées pour l'année prochaine. Les amis de musique prennent un plaisir évident à faire jaillir les étincelles de la scène ensemble. « Nous sommes tous les trois très "moment présent" lors des spectacles en direct, affirme Crawford. C'est très important que le public sache qu'on ne fait pas que suivre le programme. Nous nous impliquons vraiment et nous luttons pour faire de chaque spectacle une réussite; et les étincelles jaillissent... En jouant dans les Teetotallers avec Martin et John, je réalise un rêve. C'est tout ce que peux espérer un musicien. Je trippe. »

## Trampled by Turtles

Stars and Satellites (Six Shooter Records)

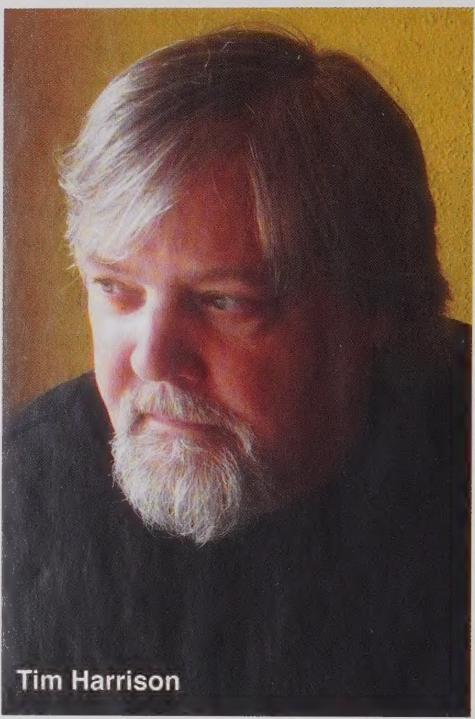
Pas assez technique pour être bluegrass, mais trop entraînant pour appartenir à la tradition des auteurs-compositeurs-interprètes, Trampled by Turtles se situe à l'intersection de ces traditions et du style post-folk contemporain cher à Bon Iver ou The Avett Brothers. Il n'est pas évident de classer Stars and Satellites dans une catégorie précise, ce qui ajoute probablement à son intérêt. Les deux premières pièces, acoustiques, au tempo étonnamment lent, évoquent les grands espaces de l'Amérique. Puis le groupe se lance dans la tourbillonnante « Walt Whitman » où le banjo prédomine. Dès la première écoute, on sent qu'on va aimer l'album. Par la suite viennent les chansons sur le regret, « Widower's Heart », puis sur l'espoir, « Keys to Paradise », puis des kilomètres de bonne musique débordante de mandoline, de violon et de banjo suivent. D'après leurs prestations aux festivals de folk canadiens cet été, on s'attend à ce que Stars and Satellites figure sur un grand nombre de listes présentant les meilleurs albums de l'année.

– By Richard Thornley



Trampled By Turtles

# The Opinion Page



Tim Harrison

**Singer/songwriter, sometime folk festival artistic director, music producer, sound engineer, and broadcaster Tim Harrison abhors the idea of folk festivals holding contests as a means of recruiting free talent for their programs.**

Months ago I made some comments on Facebook regarding folk festivals that use audition contests to determine their lineups. The editor suggested I share some of my views with *Penguin Eggs'* readers. I am honoured to do so.

So what is the motive behind these contests? Do they actually serve the culture or do they simply support business and operational structures? Do folk festival organizations take advantage of artists who are vulnerable by virtue of their easily identifiable dreams and ambitions?

I know festival organizations are motivated by passion and respect for the art form. However, due to diminishing government and corporate support for the arts, many groups have followed a path of least resistance in funding. Whether from the best of intentions or simple greed, consciously or unconsciously, presenters have put too much onus on the artists, whose time would most certainly be better spent developing their work. The quality of artists is also affected. More important still, the money involved makes these contests

elitist. Artists who cannot afford the price of entry, the funds to travel, and the price of accommodation, are simply eliminated and the best of the best may never be heard at all.

It is true that entry into a festival was always a competition of sorts. One had to catch the ear of the artistic director but the process was egalitarian. There was no public hierarchical ranking of the artists' work as there is in these contests, and most could find the few dollars it took to mail in the entry package. I say, this is the way it should remain. We know about Bob Dylan because of the vision of one man who could see his potential, John Hammond Sr. Would Dylan win one of these contests today?

The very "best" of these festival entry opportunities is the 'pronouncement-of-best-new-folk-artist' type of contest. After paying an entry fee, usually in the \$25 dollar range, your name goes in with a limited number of artists – 800 in one case – for selection. This number is then whittled down to 32 who are given the opportunity to travel to the festival and sing two songs. You pay your way there, pay for accommodation (other than camping) and meals, and compete to be the "best new folk artist," as defined by that organization. I was told of this process for one particular festival, and it was, at that time, the only way I could be considered as a "real" artist to play the event in future years because I was deemed to be "unknown" by the festival's staff. Despite 40-odd years of creating and programming and hosting workshops at various events, recording CDs as a solo artist, and producing the work of others, having had live performances recorded by CBC, Chicago's *Midnight Special* and others, multiple CD reviews in *SINGOUT!*, *Folk Roots*, *Penguin Eggs* and many others, not to mention touring and playing, I had not, apparently, had enough "exposure" to be considered a real artist. And I would need to prove myself in their competition. I took a pass on the opportunity. Had I won, I might have been "best new folk artist" in the "On a Scooter" category.

That particular idea is probably the most glaring example of festival hubris but a close runner-up is an event created by a festival with which I have a past association, being its founder and first artistic

director. Owen Sound's Summerfolk created a little gem of a contest called, of all things, "The Last Chance Saloon." It was implemented sometime in the '90s when festivals were getting very hungry. Some were resorting to retreading old pop acts as headliners in an attempt to draw crowds they had lost by discontinuing workshop excellence and focusing on the night "show" as the "ticket seller". It is no surprise these actions alienated the folk crowd and helped to guide festivals down the slippery slope of trading cultural depth for entertainment value. Pardon the digression but it points to the essence of how this type of travesty began. For the artist, this Last Chance Saloon involves paying a fee (\$15) to be chosen as one of 11 finalists in a night of entertainment similar to *American Idol*, or *Timbuktu Has Talent*. If chosen, you pay your own transportation to the event, and then house yourself in town if you happen to be from somewhere else (most everyone is). You then play for an audience who has paid \$16 general admission to see you and has the ability to cast a vote to choose the evening's "winner". You have just contributed to the cash flow of the festival by "donating" your talents, time, and money, but here is the payoff for you: the prize, should you win, is the opening spot at the festival which you play while everyone is filing in for the Friday night show.

I say the "Last Chance Saloon" and all the contests of its ilk should be burnt to the ground for the dignity of all concerned. There are better ways to raise funds and festival awareness. Why not try seasonal multi-talent music events. Rent a hall, pay the artists, celebrate the community and raise some money. We used to do it all the time, and it worked.

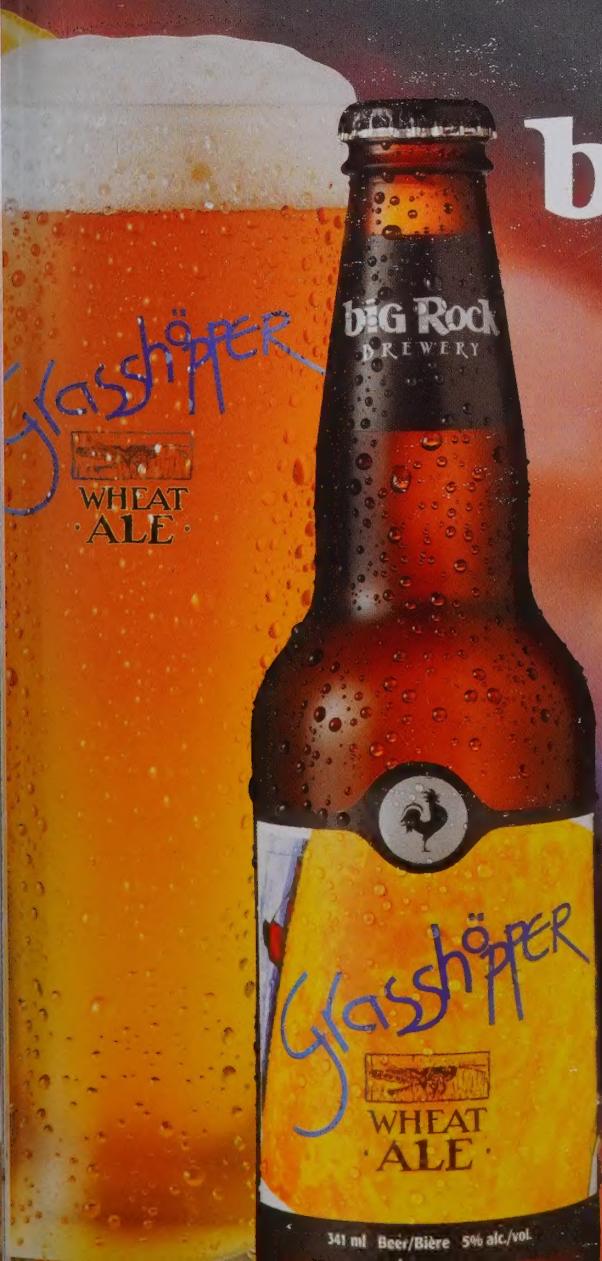
Culture is the psychological infrastructure of our society. It gives us meaning and direction. We need to be searching for financial solutions outside the pocketbooks of artists to sustain them and the work they do. We need to monetize the arts through government, corporations and individual patronage created through education and enlightenment. We need bridges to span the rivers and, just as important as the bridge itself, we need ideas with emotional resonance, the arts, to give the crossing of the bridge meaning, and to record the experience for the future.



# Hand-Crafted Music Deserves Hand-Crafted Beer

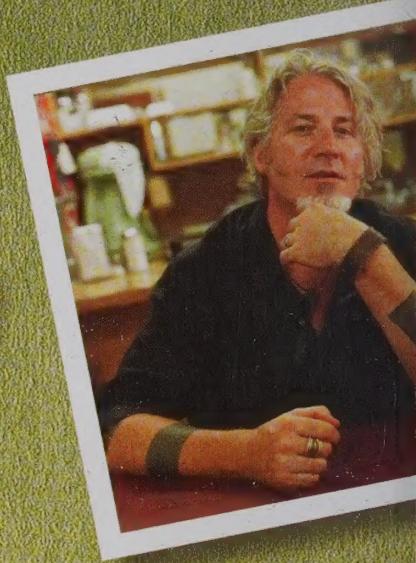
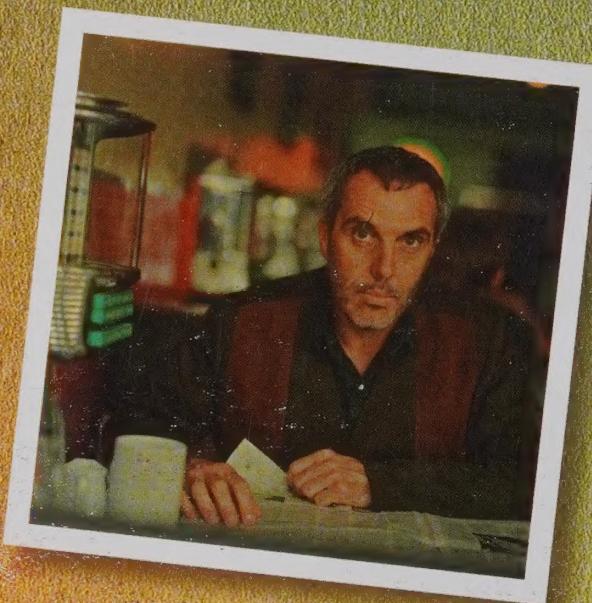


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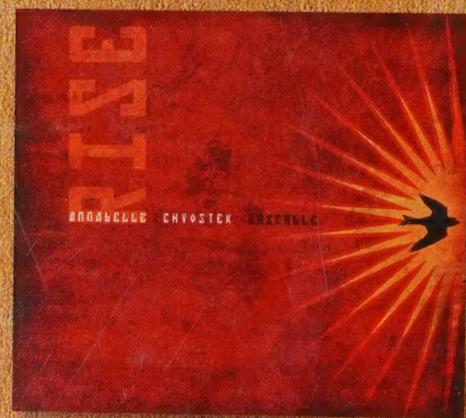


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# THREE GREAT SONGWRITERS WITH SOMETHING TO SAY

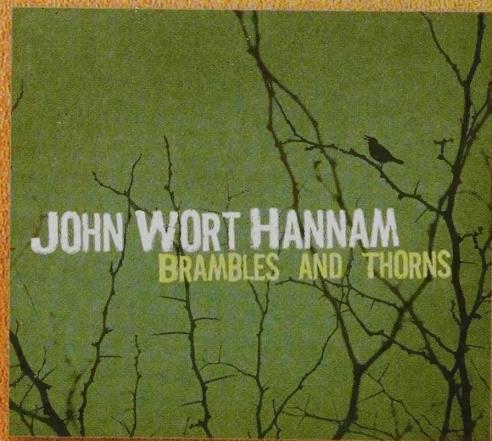


**ANNABELLE  
CHVOSTEK**



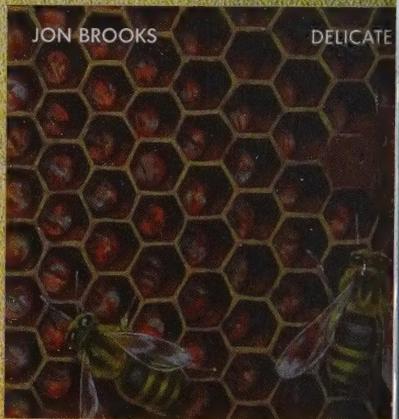
“ Maybe we’re preparing for the big shift. If things break down for a while, we’ll keep right on singin’ and playin’ and dancin’ no matter what. The margins of culture are what define the centre, and vice versa. I think being in the margins is just more fun, more human. ”

**JOHN  
WORT  
HANNAM**



“ My inspiration comes from my surroundings. I live in a tiny town. It’s a typical one-horse town – there’s not much there, but I get a lot of inspiration just by watching people trying to make a go of it. ”

**JON  
BROOKS**



“ A song’s highest aim is to invoke empathy – to offer that rare sight of ourselves in others. In this sense, the songwriter is simply trying to ‘politicize love’, hence my contention: today’s song should be a lobbyist for compassion to be our principal representative in government office. ”

*borealis*